



# THE INDEPENDENT

## ON SATURDAY

Saturday 15 November 1997 (IR65p) 70p No 3,455

### Britain and drugs: doctors say cannabis can cure you, while our worst crack war erupts in London



Rival gangsters are waging what may be Britain's worst drugs war in a small area of London. The police officer heading the inquiry tells *Jason Bennetto, Crime Correspondent*, that the death toll is likely to rise.

Gun warfare involving Jamaican style "Yardie" criminals in London is threatening to escalate, a senior detective warned yesterday.

He said that a disturbing upsurge in the number of young drug dealers carrying guns has been partly to blame for a spate of murders in the north west of the capital. Fifty two people have been killed in the area this year, including two this week, compared with 34 in the whole of 1996. Last week two unarmed officers were shot at seven times on a council estate in the north west.

The rise in the use of firearms by criminals involved in drugs mirrors problems ex-

perienced in other cities, notably Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow.

Detective Superintendent Colin Hardingham, who is heading an inquiry into four murders in north west London warned yesterday that a gun culture was rapidly growing among a group of young black men who were mimicking traits of the violent Jamaican gangsters, known as Yardies.

He said: "It seems to be the thing to have a gun. Just as business people in the city wear a suit, these characters carry a gun or have access to one."

"Many of the young black kids will call themselves Yardies, but they don't have any real links. It's just a status thing - it's a term that is used to frighten people."

"The culture is committed to drugs. It's predominately crack cocaine which is where the money is."

"The gangs are very loose knit. They fall out with each other and are based in parts of London."

He added: "Some murders have spilled out to other parts of London and this looks to be

a growing problem."

He added that most the "Yardies" were aged from 18 to 25 and preferred automatic handguns.

In response to the escalating violence in the north west of London Scotland Yard has stepped up the number of 24 hour car patrols containing armed officers in Kilburn and advising all policemen and women to wear heavy body armour while on duty in that sector.

The violence has been concentrated on the areas of Kilburn, Willesden and Harlesden. This year there have been 15 murders in Kilburn and 25 shooting incidents. Last year there were 121 murders in London; provisional figures for this year reveal there have been 135 killings so far.

Det Supt Hardingham stressed that the 52 murders in the north west area include non drug killings, such as domestic disputes, and that where gangsters were involved, the attacks were not random, but planned. In the latest incident, Marcus Charles, 22, was killed as he left a council estate in Kilburn on Tuesday night.

Cannabis can have a beneficial medical effect, the BMA will report next week. *Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent*, says it could be a major step towards legalising the drug for medical use.

The campaign to legalise cannabis will be given a big boost next week: an expert report by the British Medical Association will say there is evidence that the drug can indeed have medical benefits.

The report will say that new medicines based on cannabis should be developed and it will spell out the legal changes needed to allow that to happen. Labour MPs who have been campaigning for the ban on cannabis to be lifted for medical use think it could be the breakthrough they have been waiting for.

The BMA report will say that some of the 400 chemical constituents of cannabis can help to control nausea, an important finding for cancer sufferers who

are using the drug illegally to enable them to continue with chemotherapy. The drug also has had benefits for patients in pain relief, and there are claims that it can help to control compulsive movements and glaucoma.

The report is based on a re-examination of published research but its appearance under the name of the BMA will give the findings added weight. It will increase pressure on the Government following the launch of the *Independent on Sunday's* campaign for the decriminalisation of cannabis and the call by the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Thomas Bingham, for a debate on the issue.

A BMA source said: "We don't talk about recreational use because that was outside our remit, but we say that for personal use, it would be better to develop new drugs. We are not suggesting that patients should be allowed to roll joints and smoke them."

The BMA annual conference came down in favour of a policy of legalising cannabis use for medicinal purposes, but the report will take the campaign a step further by con-

firmed that there is medical evidence that it can have benefits.

Paul Flynn, the Labour MP for Newport West, who has been leading the campaign in the Commons for medicinal use, was delighted by the news of the report. "It is a breakthrough, and it could provide a big boost to the campaign," he said.

The Home Office minister George Howarth told Mr Flynn in the Commons there was no medical evidence that cannabis provided medicinal benefits. The Home Secretary Jack Straw has maintained a tough line in resisting all pressure for cannabis to be legalised, but Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, has been more sympathetic.

Mr Dobson has indicated that if medical evidence could be found, he would have no objections to cannabis being legalised for medicinal use only. Mr Flynn intends to challenge the Home Office again with the BMA findings.

If the law is changed, new drugs will have to be created and tested before they are made available.

#### INSIDE TODAY

##### MAGAZINE

Exotic eating: food and drink special issue  
PLUS

Ute Lemper, Chicago's mature babe

##### TIME OFF

Skiing in Colorado, 48 hours in Istanbul

##### ARTS/19

How the music director of the ENO is fighting for his opera's life

#### TODAY'S NEWS

##### Blair aide in FI row

Jonathan Powell, Tony Blair's chief of staff, yesterday emerged as a key player in the row over donations to the Labour Party from Bernie Ecclestone. Mr Powell, a keen Formula One fan, appears to have been involved in arranging Ecclestone's £1m pre-election gift, and was present when the Formula One organisers sought exemption after the election from Labour's proposed ban on tobacco advertising in sport. *Page 10*

##### Bottom of the pops

The pop music charts were 45 years old yesterday - but music pundits say they don't matter any more. Record sales success today depends on marketing, and high impact on MTV. *Page 3*

## Zinfandel?

Wasn't he an Astronaut?

### Iraqi threats as US warships move in

The Iraqis have threatened to shoot down an American U-2 spy plane which is expected to fly over Iraq today. Extra forces are being deployed in the region. The Iraqi foreign minister said he would 'not be surprised' if the crisis escalated into military confrontation. *Mary Dejevsky and Fran Abrams report*

President Clinton yesterday ordered a second aircraft carrier, the USS *George Washington*, to the Persian Gulf to join the USS *Nimitz* and the fleet of warships

already there, almost doubling the US military strength in the region. The White House said the US would continue to work through the United Nations to "bring proper pressure to bear on Saddam Hussein to achieve compliance" with UN resolutions. The spokesman, Mike McCurry, declined to speculate on the possible use of military force.

The British defence minister John Reid announced that six Harrier GR7s based at RAF Wittering, Cambridgeshire, were being prepared for possible deployment in the Gulf. Their notice to move is to be reduced from five days to 48 hours. HMS *Invincible*, an aircraft carrier, was heading towards Gibraltar.

As ministers announced

measures to prepare Britain for the possibility of renewed conflict, Tony Blair said Saddam Hussein would make "a very, very severe mistake indeed" if he did not come back in line with United Nations Security Council resolutions.

The Prime Minister is expected to phone Bill Clinton today to voice his support for America's tough stance on Iraq's decision to expel US weapons inspectors.

Mr Blair said yesterday: "I think it is absolutely essential that we realise that the reason we are taking this action is because Iraq must not be able to develop weapons of mass destruction biological and chemical warfare. If that happens the consequences, not just for that region but for the whole of the

world would be disastrous."

The Iraqi foreign minister, Mohammad Said al-Sahaf, said meanwhile that Iraq did not want military confrontation. If there were an attack, however, he stressed that Iraq would "stand firm and emerge strong".

He was speaking only hours after UN weapons inspectors had left Baghdad by air, withdrawn by the head of Unscm (the UN commission responsible for disarming Iraq) in protest against Iraq's summary expulsion of six American inspectors the previous day.

Mr al-Sahaf attacked the decision, saying that the Australian chairman of Unscm, Richard Butler, had acted on behalf of the US and without authorisation from the UN.

Only seven members of the

team remain as a skeleton staff at Unscm headquarters in Baghdad. The Iraqi deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, who had spent much of the past week trying to present Iraq's case at the UN, left New York yesterday for Paris without putting his country's case direct to the Security Council. He did succeed in a presenting his case to American television viewers, appearing on almost every major network and cable television talkshow on Thursday evening, parrying alternately curious and

aggressive questions about Iraq's behaviour.

When it was put to him by a television reporter that the UN inspectors wanted only to apply the familiar principle "trust and verify" to Iraq's compliance with UN resolutions, Mr Aziz said: "But we must know that those who verify are impartial." And he restated Iraq's view that the weapons inspections and surveillance flights were simply a cover for the US to pursue its own interests.

*Iraq crisis, pages 12-13*



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Do the pop charts matter any more?

The pop charts are 45 years old. But do they have any meaning, either for record companies or for the public? David Lister looks at a national institution.

Forty-five years ago yesterday, Al Martino, an American balladeer with a short-back-and-sides and a cheesy grin, grabbed a niche in social history with the first number-one record.

New Musical Express had decided to publish a chart listing the top-selling records in Britain over the previous week. From that moment on the charts have reflected and sometimes even helped to determine youth culture.

The singles charts, unlike the album charts, have notably been less than wholly accurate in charting musical fame and talent. Superstars such as The Who and Led Zeppelin never had a number one single, nor have Dire Straits. Pink Floyd had only one. Bob Dylan, one of the more influential figures of the century, has only ever had a nodding acquaintance with the charts. And in a supreme denial of logic, perhaps the best double A-side ever released - The Beatles' "Penny Lane"/"Strawberry Fields Forever" - only made it to number two in 1967, kept off the top by Engelbert Humperdinck.

But whatever the anomalies in the charts over 40 years, or so, records have rarely moved in and out of the higher reaches so speedily and so bewilderingly as now. Artists can come and go from the number one spot, with their names barely registering on the public. It costs a record company around £100,000 to launch a



Aqua may be top of the pops today, but they are a perfect example of a one-hit wonder

single, about a third of that sum usually going on an accompanying video, necessary for MTV and other television promotion. But statistics show that half the records in the top 20 are there for one week.

Jonathan King, pop pundit, producer, recording artist and impresario, told BBC Radio's Today programme yesterday: "Sadly, the chart now is almost totally unimportant to the industry and the public. In the old days it used to be the case that sales and popularity were one and the same thing." He said later that entry into the chart

was now just as likely to be determined by marketing or special price offers as by the ability of the artist or popularity. "In the old days, DJs abroad would pounce on the number one selling record in Britain. Now they just laugh at you."

David Hughes, director of external affairs at EMI, disagrees. He says: "Of course the charts are important. They are still the only barometer the public has of its sales."

Twenty-one singles have been at number one this year, with the changing nature of chart compilation shown by

the fact that grocery stores submit returns on record sales.

Chart compilers CIN point out to a renaissance in the chart single. The highest year for singles sales was 1979 when 89 million were sold. This year 85 million have been sold. In 1992 60,000 sales would move a song to number one. Last year it took a sale of 145,000.

And today's number one "Barbie Girl" by Aqua, a novelty song by a Scandinavian group in which a young lady is compared to the eponymous doll. One feels the phrase "one-hit wonder" coming on.

Smith launches plans for £160m sports academy

Ministers yesterday announced its revamped plans for a £160m national academy of sport. It said the new institute will be the centrepiece of its policy to promote sport. Amanda Kelly looks at the Government's vision.



Chris Smith: Concessions to big sports

Much of what Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, said at the launch of the new academy yesterday was geared towards appeasing the spectator sports which had complained that they were being excluded from the original plans.

The academy headquarters, the location of which has yet to be decided, will be primarily geared towards Olympic sports and those minority sports lacking a commercial element.

But, in a concession to games such as football, cricket and rugby league, which said they would set up their own academies in response to the Government's initial plans, Mr Smith said they would be allowed to make use of facilities such as medicine, sports science, nutrition advice and research.

But he added: "We strongly support the desire of more commercially based sports to establish their own academies. They will also be able to take advantage of the central technical expertise."

"Every sport in this country will benefit from these facilities. There will be training facilities for a number of core UK sports, including athletics, road cycling,

judo, swimming, tennis and triathlon."

As well as a headquarters, the academy will also consist of a regional network of training and medical facilities throughout the country, with eight locations in England, several in Scotland and one each in Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr Smith said: "These proposals offer an historic opportunity to equip our very best sportsmen and women with access to the most modern facilities and technical back-up essential to compete - and win - at the highest levels."

"Future generations of medal winners will acknowledge their debt to the decisions we have announced today. They will put and keep the UK at the top of international sport."

The Government will choose the site of the headquarters, which has been allocated an extra £60m, from a short-list of three bids - East Midlands, Oxfordshire and Sheffield - at a later date. Mr Smith asked the bidders to make their presentations within the next few weeks.

The first response from the world of sport came from David Davies, director of public affairs at the Football Association.

He said: "The FA welcomes today's announcement. Our priority in football is to lift standards at all levels. The Government is committed to giving every sport the best chance to do the same. Their proposals recognise the importance of sport to the whole nation. They are inclusive proposals aimed at benefiting all sports. They recognise the contribution that football can make - and we will make it. We look forward to discussing these matters with the Government in the near future."

When Mr Smith first announced his plans, they provoked John Major, the former prime minister, to break his self-imposed post-election silence to criticise the Government. He argued that sports like cricket - for which he has a passion - would be forced to accept satellite television contracts in order to fund their own academies. That would result in fewer games being shown on terrestrial television, he argued. It was not clear yesterday whether he finds the new proposals any more acceptable.

Spice girl effect on City and business

Are the Spice Girls finished? And does it matter a jot? Yes and yes, says the stock exchange. David Lister, Arts News Editor, analyses the rumblings and concludes that girl power has not yet been deposed.

Predictions of the demise of worldbeating pop groups are always made with relish and have been made since the dawn of rock'n'roll.

The Duke of Edinburgh once found it necessary to defend himself publicly when he was reported as saying The Beatles were "on the wane", a remark which inspired hundreds of column inches. "I actually said they were 'away'," he explained.

Now it is the turn of the Spice Girls. At the start of the week it was confirmed that the Spice Girls had sacked their manager who had helped build their image and exerted total control. By Thursday night they were being booed off the stage at an awards ceremony in Spain. "Never believe your own publicity," pop guru Pete Waterman warned as the girl power champions said they would be managing their own affairs henceforth.

Habits rarely comes so quickly. But does any of it matter outside the group's fan base, which anyway is largely aged under 10 and has little interest in backroom fallout or Spanish irritability?

The answer appears to be yes. On Monday, shares in EMI, the parent label

of Virgin on which the Spice Girls record, fell, with dealers claiming that was a direct result of fears for the group's future.

A whole host of companies from Pepsi to Walker Crisps to Asda will also be worried. They are among the product endorsements that Fuller arranged for his charges. And, of course, the balance of payments might suffer a blip. The girls have already sold 19 million records worldwide, and their world tour is only just beginning.

The parting of company with 36-year-old Fuller, Svengali Spice, might yet return to haunt the girls. Feistiness and girl power had much to do with their disillusionment. Fuller had become too close to one of his charges, Emma Bunton, aka Baby Spice, and her colleagues resented that encroachment on their unity. He also worked



Dolly jolly: Spice Girls products include everything from crisps to toys

them extremely hard and told them when they could go out and where they could go, which they came to resent as they became millionaires. Suspecting the bubble could burst at any time, Fuller also piled up product endorsements which made money but weren't good for the rock image.

But one industry source said last night: "These were factors. But the other factor was the mathematics. Fuller was on 20 per cent. Work out how much that leaves for each of the five girls. Less than 20 per cent. They have done their simple division. The golden rule in this industry is 'don't earn more than the talent'."

With sales of their new album lower than expected, less than 250,000 compared to 750,000 for Oasis's latest offering, their imminent downfall is being predicted. Overkill in product endorsement, the over-10s losing interest, and potential fallout among the band are all being mentioned.

But that is likely to be a premature analysis. In the short term, Virgin will now step in where Fuller so studiously kept them distant before. They will provide the necessary back-up from drivers to roadies and publicists. Then there is a film, *Spiceworld: The Movie* opening on Boxing Day. It is certain to be a huge holiday attraction.

With such a young fan base, the Spice Girls were never destined to have too lengthy a flirtation with global fame. But as the parents of all pre-pubescent girls know, to talk of them being finished already is much exaggerated. They only have to look on the bedroom walls.





# 5/CRIME

## Babies are most at risk of being murdered

From watching television or reading newspapers you could easily believe most killings in Britain are carried out by gun-toting drug dealers or mysterious sex stalkers. But, says Jason Bennett, Crime Correspondent, official figures reveal a very different picture.

Babies aged under one year old are most at risk of homicide, with 44 deaths per million people in England and Wales, compared with the national average of 12 per million. Women are far more likely to be strangled or suffocated than men, while males are most likely to be stabbed to death.

Only 8 per cent of the 681 people killed in England and Wales last year were shot dead, according to police and Home Office figures released this week.

Detailed analysis of criminal statistics give a fascinating insight into the true nature of killing in Britain. It reveals that far from being a country over-run by serial killers who strike for no reason and are never caught, most suspects were known by their victims and the majority are jailed.

England and Wales have one of the lowest homicide rates - offences that include murder, manslaughter or infanticide - in the world.

You are more than twice as likely to be killed in countries such as Finland, France, Portugal and Scotland and five times as likely in the United States.

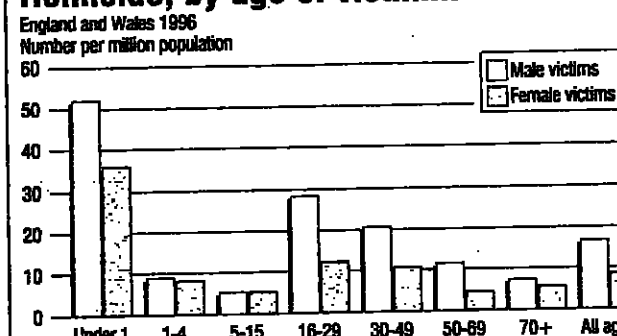
The number of homicides dropped by 10 per cent from the record total in 1995, although it was still the fifth highest this century and violent crime is continuing to rise to all-time highs. Two-thirds of the homicide victims were male, one-third female.

Statistically, babies are at the greatest danger of being killed, usually by their parents, although children under 16 are not in a high risk group. As with the overall figure, children who are killed usually die at the hands of someone they know, not those of a lurking paedophile. After babies, the group most at risk are men aged between 16 and 49 - not young women or pensioners who are often considered more vulnerable. A quarrel, revenge, or loss of temper accounted for more than half of all killings in 1996. Only 6 per cent of homicides were carried out to steal goods or gain money. Deaths caused by mentally disturbed suspects, and where there was no apparent motive, comprised just 4 per cent of incidents in 1996.



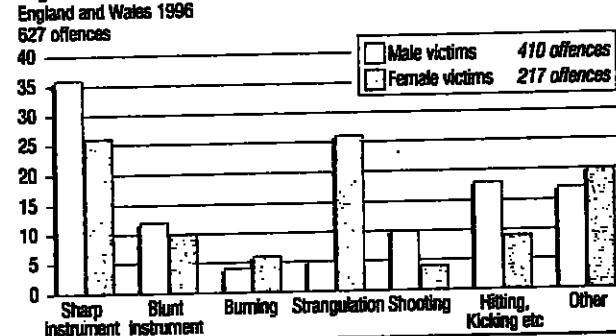
Image of violence: despite the impression we get from television, only 8 per cent of murders are committed by someone using a gun

### Homicide, by age of victim...



Just over half male victims and three-quarters of females ones knew the main or only suspect. Nearly half the women were killed by former partners or lovers, compared with only 6 per cent of men. Men were far more likely - 38 per cent - to be killed by a stranger than women - 14 per cent.

### by method...



The most common method of killing was with a sharp instrument, such as a knife, which was used by about one-third of the suspects. Men were more likely to be killed with a knife, hit, kick or shot, than women. Strangulation and burning were more popular methods of killing females than males. Suspects had been charged or convicted in all but about 10 per cent of the homicides.

Compared with the rest of the world, England and Wales have a low homicide rate. Of those countries where statistics were obtained only Norway with nine per million people, Japan with 10 per million, and the Republic of Ireland and Belgium which both

### by country...

Country	Killings recorded by the police, 1996	Rate per 100,000 population
England and Wales	681	12
Northern Ireland	35	2.1
Scotland	138	2.6
Austria	176	2.2
Germany	1,248	1.6
Italy	1,010	1.8
Portugal	381	3.9
Sweden	199	2.2
Switzerland	196	2.4
U.S.A.	19,645	7.4

have 12 per million, were lower. Northern Ireland recorded the largest rise in homicides - up by 52 per cent - in the past year to 21 per million, followed by Switzerland, where the rate rose by 23 per cent.

© Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1996 is available from 0171 873 9090, price £22.70.

## Ukraine's stolen art found in Lancashire

Police in Lancashire have recovered two paintings worth at least £1m that had been snatched from a Ukrainian museum. Five men were also arrested yesterday in the climax of police said had been an eight-month operation.

The works were stolen in a violent raid on the Ukrainian National Museum in the city of Poltava earlier this year.

Yesterday armed officers arrested three men in Kirkham, Lancashire, and another two were arrested by the Metropolitan Police in London.

The paintings are *Night Fight: Turks with Crusaders* by the 19th century French artist Delacroix, and *Still Life with Lobsters* by Pieters, a 17th century Dutch painter.

The men arrested are being questioned at police stations in Lancashire. One is believed to be of Russian origin, the others are Britons.

Superintendent Terry Smith of the North West Regional Crime Squad said he had spoken to the Ukrainian ambassador in London this morning.

"The ambassador asked me to express his thanks for the efforts of the police agencies in this country that have led to the recovery of these paintings," he said. The ambassador added that the paintings were of great value to his countrymen.

They were stolen on 18 March in what Supt Smith said was a "particularly nasty and vicious" attack when the raiders used incapacitant sprays on museum staff. After investigations involving Interpol, British police set up Operation Package which led to the stake-out of an industrial unit in Kirkham yesterday.

Two men arrived there in a Ford Escort car and were arrested by armed officers. No shots were fired and the men were found to be unarmed.

Shortly afterwards another man was arrested in the car park of a nearby supermarket.

The paintings were recovered inside the units, rented from Railtrack, wrapped in newspaper and inside cardboard boxes. They are now being verified and evaluated by art experts.

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New village  
Threat to  
Kingston's  
poplar trees  
draws the  
eco-veteran  
warriors

Virgin



## New village menaces Thames wildlife site

The old firing range of Woolwich Arsenal, east London, is the focus of skirmish between builders and conservationists. Stephen Goodwin, Heritage Correspondent, looks at the arguments as the new town of Thamesmead prepares to march westwards.

Greenwich Council will next week consider an application to build an "urban village" of 1,500 homes on a wasteland described by conservationists as "one of the last - and finest - of London's wildlife sites beside the Thames".

It seems likely the development by Thamesmead Town and a consortium of builders will get the go-ahead. Planners had always intended that the new town begun in the 1960s should expand westward along the industrially scarred riverside.

The 130-acre site was once

a testing ground for the Royal Arsenal munitions factory at Woolwich. In future it will be known as the Galleon's Reach Urban Village with an eventual 2,000 homes, offices, workshops, pubs, a hotel and leisure facilities.

The aim, according to Thamesmead Town, the trust which took over from the Greater London Council, is to give the development the dynamism of a city with the familiarity and "neighbourhood scale" of a village. Work places will be mixed in with the housing and shops and other amenities should be no more than 10 minutes' walk away.

But since firing stopped and the range was abandoned in 1967, wildlife has moved in, assisted by the new town's efforts to clear and cover what was heavily contaminated land. In 1988 the area was designated as of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation.

Fifty plant species rare to London have been found there, including hare's foot clover and thyme-leaved sandwort. It is also home to 16 nationally rare and notable species of invertebrates including Webb's Wainscot

moth and the silvery leaf-cutter bee. The insects in turn provide food for a rich bird population.

"If the development goes ahead it will mean the extinction of several species in Greenwich," said the London Wildlife Trust, the country's leading urban nature conservation body. Even the developer's own consultants evaluated the site as one of the top five sites in the East Thames corridor for invertebrates.

Mathew Frith, the trust's conservation manager, said Greenwich should live up to its responsibility as the Millenni-

al borough, refuse the application and "keep the Green in Greenwich". London had lost many superb wildlife habitats over the last decade, Mr Frith added. "It is time that this destruction was halted and we hope Greenwich will set an example to other London authorities."

Thamesmead Town emphasised the close involvement of the Government's Environmental Agency in plans for the urban village which will include a wetland corridor. There will also be a 70-acre riverside park at Tripcott Point where mudflats

are an important wintering ground for wading birds.

The conservationists' case does not look strong. The firing ranges are a "brownfield" site that has long been earmarked for housing and huge sums of public money have been spent making it safe.

The clinching argument though it likely to be the pressing demand for new homes. With the Government predicting another 4 million will be needed over the next 20 years it would be a surprise if Greenwich comes down on the side of the leaf-cutter bee.

## Greener cars up to task

Tony Blair's announcement yesterday of a task force to encourage motorists to use greener, more fuel-efficient cars could be read as an acknowledgement that most people will not be persuaded to switch to public transport.

As the Prime Minister was advocating a new attitude so drivers "think green first", the independent Transport Research Group issued figures showing that while motorists readily admitted there were healthier ways of travelling, the car won for sheer convenience.

Two-thirds of respondents said they used cars because public transport was inadequate and of poor quality. "Stories about road rage and the environmental damage caused by cars may have increased the stress levels of drivers, but they have had no impact on their driving habits," said Austin Williams, the TRG co-ordinator.

The new task force will be headed by Gavin Strang, the transport minister, and co-chaired by Ian McAllister, chief executive of Ford in the UK and president of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. Its aim will be to promote fuel efficient, less polluting vehicles people actually want to buy and drive. Mr Blair said: "To be modern is to be green. I want people to be able to make choices and choosing an environmentally friendly car should be a cost-effective alternative."

Friends of the Earth said task force would have to overcome resistance from the motor industry and even then the initiative was only a partial solution.

— Stephen Goodwin

## Threat to Kingston's poplar trees draws the eco-veteran warriors

The London borough of Kingston, one of London's most salubrious residential areas, has become the latest focus of confrontation between developers and eco-warriors.

Plans to fell 56 poplar trees in a public park bordering the river Thames are encountering bitter opposition from local residents, who have set up a well-organised and vocal protest group, Friends of Canbury Gardens.

But a handful of so-called "veterans", of the Newbury Bypass and Twyford Downs disputes, have descended on the town and erected rope ladders between the trees in preparation for their defence of the poplars when the chainsaws arrive.

The row of poplars was planted in the Thirties to shield Canbury Gardens from a power station, since decommissioned and demolished.

Fairclough Homes, a developer, is building an estate of luxury flats and houses on the derelict land.

Part of the agreement signed by the Liberal Democrat-run council with Fairclough Homes was that permission would be granted to chop down the trees, so that the estate would have river views.

This has just come to the notice of residents living near the park, who have put together a petition containing 4,500 signatures.

Dennis Doe, a Conservative councillor, said that insufficient attention was paid to the trees during formulation of an area development plan.



On-line: A protester hanging from ropes strung between the branches of condemned poplar trees in Kingston, south-west London

Photograph: Keith Dobney

"The poplars got relegated," he said. "It is being said that they're dead anyway, which they are not."

The arrival of the ecological protesters has not been greeted with unmitigated enthusiasm by Kingston's affluent residents, some of whom regard them as an eyesore. One, who identified himself only as Ian, said the council was "trying to privatise public space".

Jack Taylor, a council spokesman, said

that the borough was looking into the legal situation regarding the protesters, but that it would be up to the developers to evict them if they took to the trees. "We don't want anyone to get injured," he said.

Mr Taylor said the developers had pledged to spend £25,000 on replanting trees and landscaping the gardens. The issue is to be discussed again at a full council meeting on 17 December.

—Kathy Marks

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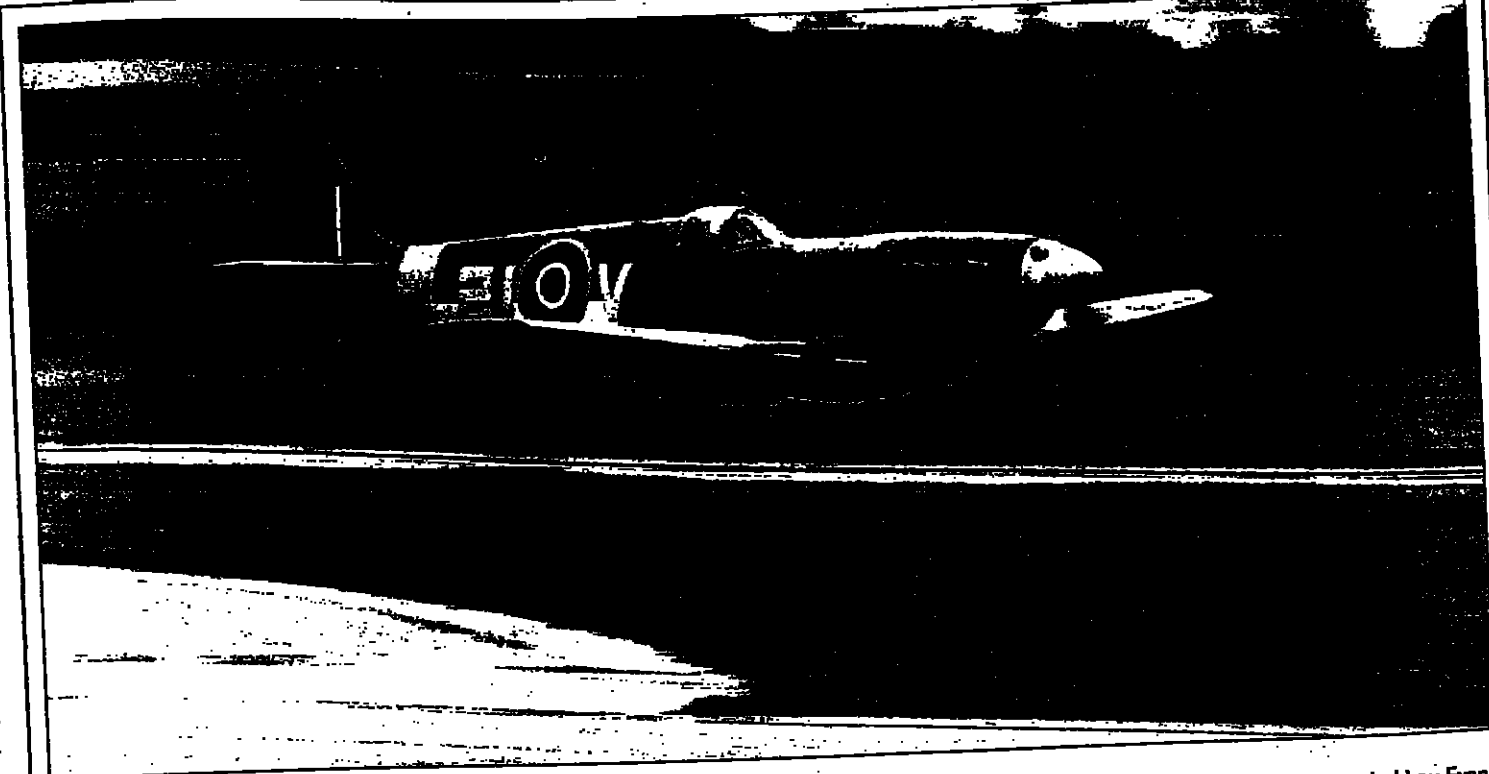
## Inquest call for smoke alarm law

A coroner yesterday said people who did not fit smoke alarms in their homes should face prosecution after he recorded accidental death verdicts on four children aged three to six who died in a blazing house.

Dr Richard Whittington, who heard that the most likely cause of the fire was a discarded cigarette end in the lounge, told the Birmingham inquest: "When you think hundreds of pounds are spent by smokers, the little bit of money to be spent on a smoke alarm is of such little consequence that nobody can afford not to have them fitted."

Later, he told a Fire Service news conference that he would welcome a situation in which those who did not install smoke alarms were prosecuted in the same way as drink-drivers who killed innocent people on the roads.

He said: "The time has come when the failure to fit a smoke alarm should be considered as gross negligence."



Wings: Squadron Leader Paul Day takes a restored Spitfire on its first flight since 1945 at RAF St Athan, Wales. Photograph: Huw Evans

## Dover braces itself for NF march on asylum hostel

The National Front will today be allowed to march in Dover to stir up emotions over the recent arrival of Romany asylum seekers. Ian Burrell, who heads anti-Nazi groups, has urged the Government to take a hard line on immigration for a new climate of hatred.

Plans for a major counter demonstration. Protesters have pledged to form a human protective wall around the asylum hostel and coach loads of protesters will arrive this morning from London, Birmingham, France and other parts of Kent.

Julie Waterson of the Anti-Nazi League said that the Government was partly culpable for creating the conditions on which bigotry has fed. "It is horrendous that a Labour government who are verbally committed to anti-racism and saying they want to stop racist violence are allowing a demonstration and march around Dover where people who are fleeing persecution are being held," she said.

The sight of the National Front parading through ethnically mixed areas behind a cluster of Union flags was thought to have been consigned to the annals of modern British history as an unsavoury footnote on Seventies politics.

Left in disarray by the splintering of the far-right over the past 20 years, the party has dwindled to a handful of supporters. Yet to the horror of anti-Nazi protesters, Kent Police have given the go-ahead for the NF to hold a march today between the Hoverport and East Docks at Dover, key points of entry into the United Kingdom.

The march is intended to end close to a hostel that has become home to some of the 1,000 or so Romany refugees from eastern Europe who arrived in Britain last month to a chorus of complaints about benefit scrounging. The asylum seekers have been dubbed "the Gipsy Czechs" by the British press, and the opportunity has been seized by the far-right who have descended on Dover circulating leaflets saying: "Dover In Crisis. Invasion Alert!"

The first attempt at a public march by the NF in more than four years has triggered

the controversy surrounding the Romany asylum seekers increased this week as a further coach load arrived in London.

The National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns, which is co-ordinating the Dover protest, blamed the march on Michael O'Brien, the immigration minister, who recently announced a reduction in the time allowed for asylum appeals.

Kent police said only the Home Secretary had the power to ban the march. A force spokesman said that the NF marchers will be limited to 50 and have been warned not to carry placards which might be "racist inflammatory abusive or insulting". A similar restriction on numbers has been put on the counter demonstration.

The Home Office said that Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, could only stop the march if a senior police officer applied to the District Council for a ban on public processions under the Public Order Act.

## Road safety chief's repeat tragedy

A German engineer killed the partner of one of Britain's leading road safety campaigners while test driving a car on a public road. Klaus Menck, a Vauxhall motor engineer, was yesterday found guilty of causing death by dangerous driving.

Menck, who could face a jail sentence, was overtaking when he collided with a car driven by motorist Richard Longworth on the B655 near Hexton, Hertfordshire. Mr Hexton suffered massive internal injuries and died a week later.

The victim's partner, through a cruel stroke of irony, was Mary Williams, director of the road safety organisation Brake. It was the second time she has been bereaved by road crashes. After yesterday's hearing, she said: "Brake will be actively talking to General Motors (which owns Vauxhall) and asking the company to get involved in our work relating to best training practices. The jury have come to the right verdict. It is no good saying it was just one mistake, when such mistakes devastate lives."

Menck, 48, was one of a team of German engineers from Opel (another GM subsidiary) brought over by GM to carry out comparative tests between Vauxhall production cars and their competitors. The tests involved the engineers repeatedly driving round a 10 mile circuit of B Roads on the Bedfordshire/Hertfordshire border. The trials were carried out in darkness to keep any new models out of the public eye.

The accident happened when Menck, from Frankfurt, pulled out to overtake a Skoda and crashed head-on into Mr Longworth's Vauxhall Nova. He admitted his driving had been careless but denied it was dangerous. He said he had been unaware of a blind spot when he pulled out to overtake.

He was remanded on bail for a pre-sentence report to be prepared but warned that he could be given a prison sentence.

— Amanda Kelly

## Strike threat at Ford plant

Engineering workers at the main research centre of car giant Ford are threatening to strike next week in a dispute over the staffing of new engine testing machinery. It was announced yesterday.

Around 250 engineers at the centre in Dunton, near Basildon in Essex were ending their shift early yesterday, complaining that Ford was allowing salaried staff to operate the new machinery rather than hourly-paid skilled workers.

The action will be stepped up to a one-day strike next Wednesday unless there is an agreement, the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union warned.

## Mercy for child porn smuggler

A self-confessed paedophile convicted of smuggling child porn from Amsterdam escaped being jailed in Belfast yesterday.

Lord Justice McCollum told Ian Magill, 49, that he was in jail with other sex abusers might turn him into "a greater danger" to society. Magill, of Wellington Park, Belfast, was fined £3,500 and given a two-year suspended sentence.

He was also put on the Royal Ulster Constabulary's sex offenders register.

Heathrow customs officers caught Magill smuggling two child porn tapes - including one he made himself - and three magazines from Amsterdam in August 1995.

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## Blair aide emerges as key player in Formula One affair

The spotlight fell yesterday on Jonathan Powell, Tony Blair's right hand man, as a key figure in the centre of the controversy surrounding Bernie Ecclestone's million-pound gift. The money is due to be returned, but Labour faces a rebuff from the unions if it expects them to make up the shortfall. Kim Sengupta, Fran Abrams and Barrie Clement track the shifting scene.

At the crucial meeting on 16 October, in which Labour's U-turn on tobacco sponsorship was decided and the seeds of future strife sowed, the Prime Minister was accompanied by his chief of staff, Jonathan Powell. Both of them were aware that Formula One chief Bernie Ecclestone had donated £1m to the Labour Party.

lobbyists for the sport, Max Mosley and David Ward. A civil servant was also present, but no minutes were kept of the meeting.

Informed sources have revealed that Mr Powell was a key figure in persuading the Prime Minister that the tobacco ban should not extend to Formula One. Tessa Jowell, the minister for public health, and Frank Dobson, Secretary of State for Health, were both opposed.

Mr Powell, who it is believed had been due to become Mr Blair's Principal Private Secretary, is said to be friendly with Mr Ward, who at one time worked as a researcher for John Smith, and arranged the 16 October meeting.

Officials confirmed last night that Labour officials spoke to Mr Ecclestone's aides about the possibility of a second large donation after the general election. But it was still not clear whether the Prime Minister and his senior official knew about that when their meeting took place. A spokesman said there was "a distinction" to be made between the two operations.

The spokesman said the meeting on 16 October was to allow Mr Ecclestone to put his case for exempting Formula

One from a ban on tobacco advertising.

"It was an occasion where the Prime Minister was listening to the point of view of his visitors. The arguments were reasonably well known - they

had already been put to the Department of Health," he said.

"Jonathan Powell is the Prime Minister's chief of staff. It seems to be reasonable therefore that he should be in such a meeting."

Both Mr Blair and Mr Powell met Mr Ecclestone before the election. In addition, Mr Blair took his children to Silverstone last year, where they were driven around the race track by Damon Hill.

Mr Ecclestone had said he does not want the money back. But Labour sources said last night that the party was determined to return the £1m.

But the party simply does not have the money, with an over-

draft of £4.5m from the Co-op Bank. The unions said last night they would not be willing to bankroll the shortfall.

Yesterday the Prime Minister was again forced to defend his party's position. Speaking

Bernie Ecclestone relaxing at his Swiss chalet: The FI chief has told Labour not to return his £1m donation. Although the party is determined to give it back, it may not be able to afford to do so

Photograph: Sutton Motorsport Images

before an engagement in County Durham, he said the decision to exempt Formula One was "absolutely right".

"It was us which referred this matter to Sir Patrick Neill, who is the official watchdog. He made his recommendation, we followed it to the letter. And frankly to be chased around by a bunch of Conservatives who have never disclosed any of their donations and never returned a donation in their lives is pretty ridiculous," he said.

Last night the Tory leader, William Hague, called for a full account to be given of what happened at the meeting. "If there are no minutes we need an explanation as to why no note of the meeting was taken. If the Prime Minister will not give a full account of this issue we will be forgiven for believing that he has something to hide."

Portillo takes first steps on the big comeback

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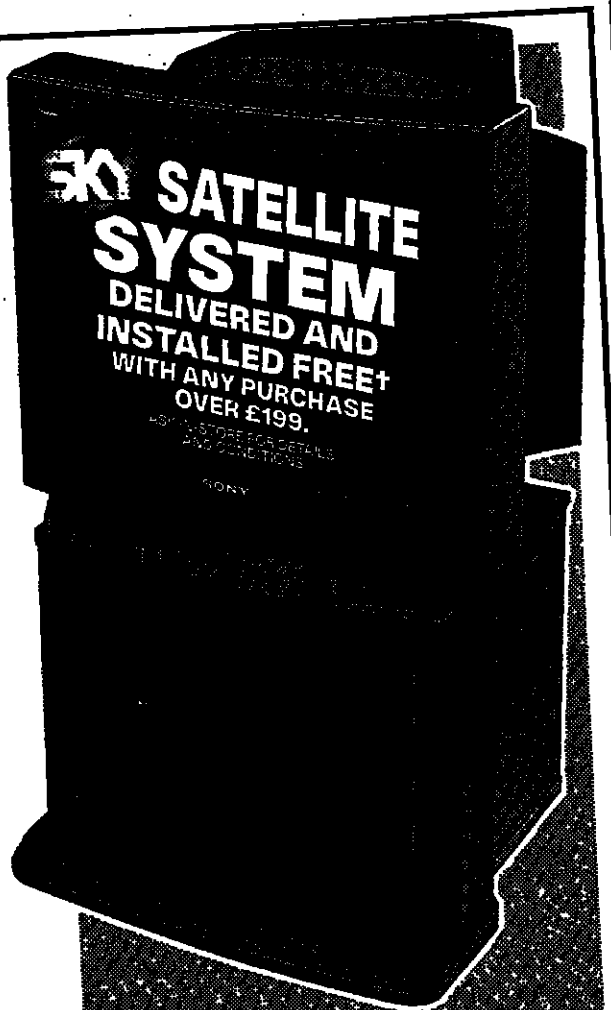
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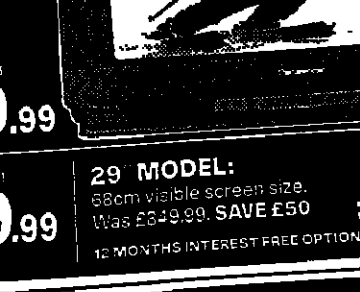
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## CHASING THE CASH

In the past it had been an accepted fact of political life that the Conservatives would out-spend Labour at general elections.

New Labour has been determined to rectify this handicap, and the fund raising mechanism had been drastically overhauled in recent years.

By the 1992 election the gap had narrowed to £11.2m by the Conservatives compared to £10.6m by Labour.

In 1996 the net income of the party was £17.1m, and the expenditure £17.7m. Out of that £7.7m came from the unions and £6.3m from fund raising, £1.7m from membership subscriptions, and another £1.4m from ancillary avenues such as publications. Contributions of more than £5,000, including the £1m given by Formula One boss Bernie Ecclestone, came from 55 donors.

In the run up to the election the director of finance, Paul Blagbrough, was officially in charge of fund raising. Others involved were

head of finance David Hughes, and director of corporate relations, Nicky Lewis.

All of them reported to the general secretary Tom Sawyer. Jonathan Powell, Mr Blair's chief of staff, is also believed to have played a part in raising funds from corporate sources.

At the moment the party has an overdraft of £4.5m with the Co-op bank, until the Ecclestone debacle it had hoped to repay a large portion of it by next year.

Apart from the traditional sources the party benefited from a blind trust set up for Tony Blair. By its very nature the identities of contributors to the Trust are not published.

Mr Blair's staff justified the secrecy surrounding the donors by claiming this means the party leader cannot be influenced by companies which give money.

Labour spin doctors suggested at first that Mr Ecclestone's contribution had been to the blind trust.

—Kim Sengupta

## Music copyright is another Catch 22

Even popular, well-considered policies are coming under scrutiny as Labour fights to clean up after the Formula One sleaze allegations. Steve Begg examines one announcement that typifies the problems now faced by the Government: just because party donors will benefit, does it mean new policies are wrong?

ing committee and was elevated to the House of Lords when Tony Blair moved into No 10.

In the current climate, it is easy to see how some eyebrows might be raised. Oasis, Creation's biggest stars, must be among the most pirated bands in the world: the new moves must surely benefit Mr McGee. Lord Levy sold M&G last month but has been in the music industry for more than 20 years. He boosted Labour funds, aggressively promoting Tony Blair's blind trust.

But what if they did influence the party on copyright law? Could anyone criticise safeguarding artists' intellectual property rights and protecting the £3.4bn in exports they generate?

The music industry was amazed that anyone could see the move, announced by Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, as anything but positive. Steve Redmond, editor-in-chief of *Music Week* magazine, said: "Successful governments have failed to connect with intellectual property industries... Chris Smith and Labour seem to be making up for that."

There was loud applause in the music industry yesterday with the news that Labour was planning a far-reaching review of copyright law to combat record piracy. Bootleg recording sales cost record companies more than £19m a year, while the threat from pirates in Asia and China and from potential Internet raiders could take the total far higher in the new millennium.

But while the champagne corks were popping, it was hard to turn a blind eye to the influence exercised over Labour policy by two music industry insiders, Alan McGee, owner of Creation Records, and Lord Levy, former owner of Magnet Records and M&G Records.

One, Mr McGee, donated £50,000 to Labour Party coffers shortly before the election and was appointed to the Government's Creative Industries Forum after the Labour victory. The other, Michael Levy, is on the party's four-strong fund-raising



Taste California Wine...ton

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# 11/POLITICS

## Portillo takes first steps on the big comeback

To the voters of Enfield Southgate - and a large part of the country - he may be yesterday's man. But to the Conservative Party he is media-friendly "good fun".

Fran Abrams looks at Michael Portillo's plans for a come-back.

There will be tea and scones with the blue rinse ladies, there will be speeches and, no doubt, there will be a certain amount of adulation.

In addition, of course, there will be the chance for the former Secretary of State for Defence to raise his head above the parapet after months in the political wilderness. This week he will embark on a whirlwind tour of the country, taking in venues in Scotland and Yorkshire as well as in the rest of England.

"He's going to attract members, he's the sort of guy the media will talk to and he raises money. He's good fun," said a party spokesman.

Mr Portillo lost to Labour's Stephen Twigg in the general election on 1 May with a massive 17.4 per cent swing against him. However, Conservative Central Office still regards him as one of the party's most popular figures.

The official line is that the tour is a thing to be greatly welcomed - indeed, it has been organised through the speakers' department at the party's Smith Square headquarters.

But in some quite corners, there must surely be an inkling of doubt.

Michael Heseltine famously built up a following after resigning from Margaret Thatcher's government by touring the country eating bad crème caramel and working the party faithful into a frenzy with his post-prandial bon mots.

So, is Mr Portillo's plan to bring the Conservatives back in from the cold, or simply himself? After all, if he were in Parliament now he might well be

leading his party, and he has made no secret of the fact that he intends to return to Westminster after a decent interval.

A party spokesman admitted that some would be bound to believe the latter.

"I think some people will play it as that. That's just a fact of life. But fundamentally he is doing it because he is a popular man within the Conservative Party."

"There's a demand for him within the constituency."

Mr Portillo approached the party to offer his services after six months in which he had made only a very few public appearances.

He had barely been seen at all until his reincarnation at the party conference in Blackpool, where he made a speech in which he astonished his audience by apologising for the last government's mistakes and asking them to embrace single mothers and gays.

Then, last week, he made another appearance in Winchester, where he went canvassing with his former ministerial colleague Gerry Malone.

Mr Malone is fighting a by-election after losing his seat by two votes to the Liberal Democrats and then successfully challenging the returning officer's verdict in court.

While there, Mr Portillo took the opportunity to show his new-found humility once more. Asked when he planned to return to Parliament, he replied: "If you have been defeated and pop up the next day asking to be re-elected, people will say you couldn't abide by the verdict of the electorate."

Speaking of his tour, he denied embarking on a pre-emptive leadership strike.

"That did not even occur to me," he said.

There was some mystery surrounding the tour last night, though. Although Central Office was happy to confirm it, Mr Portillo's office refused to give details despite repeated calls from *The Independent*.

Inquiries from other Conservative sources who phoned friends of Mr Portillo have met with a similar response.



Party animal: Michael Portillo will find adulation among the Tory faithful on his national tour Photograph: Brian Harris

## Mandelson ignites union anger

Amid mounting union anger over a leaked Cabinet memorandum, Peter Mandelson yesterday denied he was trying to undermine the Government's national minimum wage policy.

The minister without portfolio insisted that in contrast to impressions gained by Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, he was not seeking "wide exemptions" from the national minimum wage. As part of a damage limitation exercise he declared that he was simply arguing for flexibility.

However, unions yesterday expressed deep concern about his intervention on the issue. Hector MacKenzie, associate general secretary of public service union Unison, called for

an "end to interference" from ministers who were arguing for exemptions from the proposed statutory minimum wage. He said the Low Pay Commission should be allowed to get on with its work without interference.

Mr MacKenzie pointed out that there was increasing support among the business community for the proposed law. "People are not asking for a fortune, just a decent living wage for all workers."

John Edmunds, general secretary of the GMB general union, said that the kind of exceptions which Mr Mandelson seemed to be supporting would result in an "unfair and unenforceable mess".

Barrie Clement  
Labour Editor

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## THE INDEPENDENT Taste Californian Wine...tomorrow

Tomorrow sees the XIIIth Fine Wine Festival hosted by Arthur Rackham, independent fine wine merchant and sponsored by the Wine Institute of California.

Held at the Oatlands Park Hotel in Weybridge, Surrey, the festival affords anyone keen to learn more about more than 200 wines and champagnes the chance to taste their way through an outstanding range of products from around the world - including more than 20 wines from specialist Californian producers.

In order to ensure quality tasting time for all visitors, the festival is split into two sessions, from 12 noon to 3pm and from 5pm to 9pm.

Tickets for the event are normally £10 but Arthur Rackham and the Wine Institute of California are offering 20 tickets for each session free of charge to the first Independent readers to ring

01483 722962 after 10am today.

Independent ticket holders will also be asked to help judge the Outstanding Californian Wine category of the show - with awards to be presented to the winning wineries on Sunday evening. All respondents will also be presented with a £10 voucher to spend at the festival on Sunday.

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## Last superpower defied by friends and enemies alike

The US is once more flexing its muscles in the Gulf, sending another aircraft carrier and hinting at military action. But this week has seen the weaknesses of US diplomacy cruelly exposed. As Mary Dejevsky explains, the world's only superpower is having increasing trouble getting others to acknowledge its leadership.

However Mr Clinton decides to proceed with Iraq – and the question boils down to whether, and then when, to use military force – he cannot escape one conclusion. In expelling American weapons inspectors from the country, Iraq has successfully defied the United States, and if Washington uses force, it will split, perhaps irrevocably, the international alliance that has held more or less firm since the end of the Gulf War six years ago.

Throughout the week, Washington has tried to persuade itself, and the rest of the world, that Baghdad is at odds with the "international community" as represented by the United Nations. Technically, this is true: Iraq is in breach of a succession of UN Security Council resolutions. In expelling American nationals working for the UN, it has overridden a cardinal UN rule – that no country may pick and choose members of UN teams. "It is," said a Pentagon spokesman, "as though an ex-convict were trying to pick his own parole officer."

So far, however, Washington has been unable to convince any but its most loyal (and dependent) allies that the authority of the UN is worth fighting for. Of course, the United States has the military might to act by itself if it chooses. But the point is that it has tried to forge a broad anti-Iraq alliance in the diplomatic arena – and failed.

Initially, it had difficulty even in getting the latest, largely token, sanction approved by the Security Council: the travel ban on Iraqi officials deemed to have obstructed UN weapons inspections. France, Russia, China and Egypt all wavered. For differ-

ent reasons, these countries do not regard the further isolation of Iraq as being in their – or even the international – interest.

This diplomatic failure would be bad enough for the US, but it is not an isolated case. Relations with Israel are as bad as they have been for years. The peace process is moribund. In protest, many Arab states are boycotting a US-sponsored economic conference in Qatar next week, but they will go to Tehran next month for a conference of Islamic states. The US has no dialogue with Iran, but failed to convince others they should complete its isolation.

The one global superpower is finding that it cannot persuade other people to do what it wants by diplomacy alone, and its difficulties do not stop at the Middle East.

Even the Europeans and Canadians are chafing. They have challenged US laws that would penalise foreign businesses for trading with Iraq, Iran and Cuba – regimes that the US wants isolated. The American hero of the Bosnia settlement, Richard Holbrooke, returned from Cyprus this week with nothing to show for his diplomatic efforts there, and little hope either.

The only bright spot was the agreement of North Korea to send a delegation to Switzerland for four-party talks on the future of the Korean peninsula early next year. Switzerland, however, was not the venue the US had planned for the talks. The preliminary (failed) talks took place at the UN. Clearly, North Korea wanted, and got, a venue that they regarded as more neutral.

There is a sense in which Washington's diplomatic problems abroad begin at home, with the complexion of Congress and the mood of voters. This week, Mr Clinton suffered two signal political failures, both of which chip Washington's diplomatic wings. Forsaken by a majority of Congressmen from his own Democratic Party, he had to abandon his attempt to enhance his authority to negotiate international trade agreements – a defeat that called into question US commitment to free trade. On Thursday, Congress rejected a carefully wrought deal under which the US would repay its \$1bn debt to the United Nations.

These defeats sent the message that, whatever Mr Clinton might say, the US is not interested in "abroad", except on its own, strictly limited terms.

This is not primarily a failure of foreign policy. Certainly, the absence of a grand scheme and clear priorities is a handicap, but it may be the inevitable consequence of the collapse of the Soviet threat. Certainly, perceived contradictions between the US policy of "constructive engagement" (talking and trade) applied to China, and its demonising of Iraq, Iran and Cuba, leave scepticism and confusion in their wake.

But the main failure is one of diplomacy: Washington is failing to convince others that they and the US have interests and values in common. It seems to be losing the art of winning friends and influencing people, even the art of keeping the friends it has.

At the summit of industrialised nations in Denver earlier this year, US officials alienated even ardent Ameriphiles by flaunting US economic success, prompting others to retort with the figures that America was not counting – for poverty, crime, infant mortality and exclusion from health-care. On his Latin America tour last month, Mr Clinton met protests against what was seen as US economic bullying. In Europe, people are talking again about the return of the "big, ugly American".

Last month, the speaker of the US House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich, was moved to warn an academic audience that the US had to show more "sensitivity" in its diplomacy, or risk isolation. America's handling of the latest fracas with Iraq, inside and outside the United Nations, could prove to be a textbook case – and it is not over yet.

At the summit of industrialised nations

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## The evidence compiled by the UN inspectors

The following is a summary of progress made by the UN special commission (UNSCOM) – collated from reports by UNSCOM and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) – which has been working for the past six years to find, and neutralise Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

**Missiles**  
Significant progress has been achieved in the missile area. The commission is now in a position to be able to account for practically all, except two, imported combat missiles that were once the core of Iraq's proscribed missile force. The commission has also accounted for all declared operational missile launchers, both imported and indigenous, produced. To achieve the ultimate objective of full disposal of Iraq's operational missile assets, the next important step is to account for proscribed missile warheads.

Once this is accomplished, the commission's ability to report to the Security Council with confidence that Iraq does not possess a proscribed missile force would greatly increase.

**Chemical Weapons**  
Important progress has been made in this area, of which the recently completed destruction of chemical weapons-related

equipment and materials is an example. However, the ability of the commission to report positively on disarmament of this category of weapons of mass destruction will require the provision by Iraq of much more and accurate material and related access by the commission relevant to the warheads and the highly toxic VX nerve agent.

**Biological Weapons**  
This is an area unredeemed by progress or any approximation of the known facts of Iraq's programme. The Executive Chairman (eds: Richard Butler) and UNSCOM experts have made clear repeatedly to their Iraqi counterparts their deep concern about this area, both intrinsically and in terms of its impact upon the overall estimation of Iraq's willingness to abide by the decisions of the Security Council.

**Nuclear**  
The IAEA's activities regarding the investigation of Iraq's clandestine nuclear programme have reached a point of diminishing returns and the IAEA is focusing most of its resources on the implementation and technical strengthening of its plan for the monitoring and verification of Iraq's compliance with its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions.

### FLASHPOINTS FOR WASHINGTON

#### IRAQ

The US was unable to persuade more than a bare majority of the UN Security Council to impose more sanctions after Iraq increased its obstruction of UN weapons inspections. Opinions differ on the gravity of Iraq's non-cooperation with the UN: the US and Britain want Iraq to keep to the letter of UN resolutions, allowing all suspect facilities to be subject to spot inspections, keeping no-fly zones completely clear. A more relaxed view, taken by many Arab states, is that the Iraqi people are being made to suffer for the misdeeds of their leaders, that Iraq no longer threatens any country, and it is time to be more flexible.

#### IRAN

French and Russian companies have concluded agreements with Iran to develop offshore oil and gas, despite US threats under the Helms-Burton legislation to penalise foreign companies that deal with Iran, Iraq and Cuba. Washington must calculate whether the principle of isolating these regimes means more than the pursuit of good relations with Europe and Russia. Europe has reinstated its policy of "constructive engagement" with Iran, sending its ambassadors back after a six-month break. The US could find itself excluded from diplomatic and economic benefits if the Iranian government starts pursuing more outward-looking policies.

#### MIDDLE EAST

The peace process is moribund, and the US finds itself torn between continuing support for its ally, Israel, and its desire to advance the cause of peace. It has alienated both the Arab countries, which feel Washington has not delivered on undertakings to act as honest broker (and to reward them for support during the Gulf War), and Israel, which is conspicuously rejecting US advice, for instance on the building of more Jewish settlements in east Jerusalem. When the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, comes to Washington next week, he will not have an appointment to see President Bill Clinton.

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## PRODUCT RECALL

**K FOR KIDS 'STRETCH ACROSS BEARS'**

These are a row of four small cloth bears designed to stretch across a pram. Each bear is labelled with the word either 'Squeak, Rattle, Crinkle or Jingle Bell'.

Tesco has identified a problem in the manufacture of the above product.

It has been found that a small number of bears may split at the seam and the stuffing may become exposed - this could constitute a choking hazard.

As a precaution this product has been withdrawn from sale. Customers who have purchased the K for Kids 'Stretch Across Bears' since August 1, 1997 are requested to return them to any Tesco where a full refund will be given.

The manufacturers have now reviewed their procedures and undertaken a full investigation. No other K for Kids products are affected by this withdrawal.

Tesco apologises for the inconvenience this may cause and assures customers of our care and commitment to the highest standards of safety and quality at all times.

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\$2,000	18.8%	21.8%	23.9%	15.9%

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## Can America match its mouth with its muscle?

The US public has an exaggerated expectation of what can be achieved against Saddam Hussein, and it expects any action to be taken without significant American casualties. But American air power was nothing like as accurate or effective in the Gulf War as was claimed by the Pentagon. Patrick Cockburn explains why the White House is so reluctant to launch air strikes on Iraq, which will not necessarily hurt the Iraqi leader or his regime.

air-to-ground Maverick missile costing \$100,000 (£61,000) each, to hit anything was impaired or sometimes made impossible by clouds, haze, humidity, smoke and dust. It is even more dismissive of the much-vaunted Stealth bomber.

The picture that emerges of the air war is that the US and its allies were able to hit multi-storey buildings and other large, immobile targets with accuracy. Thus US planes hit telecommunications towers, the oil refinery and power station at Doura on the capital's southern outskirts as well as bridges spanning the Tigris. But it could not destroy smaller, more mobile targets such as tanks and artillery pieces.

If the air war is restarted by President Clinton the same pattern is likely to be repeated. The civilian infrastructure is easy to hit, but not the military and security apparatus which have secret and frequently changed headquarters. There could be less tolerance of Iraqi civilian casualties in the West than there was in 1991.

There is a further problem for the US. The Gulf War got Americans used to the idea that an air campaign could be waged with almost no casualties. This did not happen purely because of high precision weapons. The GAO report notes that "after two F-16 losses on day three [of the war] in the Baghdad area" the aircraft were no longer used in large numbers in the metropolitan area of the capital.

This inability, because of losing planes and pilots, to operate at low altitudes put a severe cramp on what the US can do against Iraq. For instance, moving tanks cannot be hit without risking US casualties.

The misrepresentation of what happens in the skies above Iraq is motivated by more than military bravado. At the time of Desert Storm, the US had 229 aircraft capable of delivering laser guided munitions. That figure has now risen to 500 planes. But such guided weapons are vastly more expensive than ordinary bombs and missiles. The US services have now bought, or are acquiring, guided munitions worth no less than \$58bn (£35bn).

This immense investment is in the face of the conclusion of the GAO that "the air campaign data did not validate the purported efficiency or effectiveness of guided munitions."

At the same time, however, Iraq is largely defenceless unless US and allied aircraft attack at low altitude. Its people are weary after seven years of economic siege. They remember the incompetence of their own government in 1991.

It failed to stockpile any petrol, kerosene or diesel so when the oil refineries were hit, all transport ground to a halt because of a fuel shortage.

No wonder Iraqis with cars have been queuing this week to fill up at petrol stations. But no wonder also that President Clinton is so cautious about ordering his planes to attack.

In the Gulf War in 1991, high-precision weapons - smart bombs and cruise missiles hitting their targets with unerring accuracy - appeared to rule the battlefield. Television viewers around the world saw telecommunication buildings in Baghdad erupt in flames on the first night of the war as they were hit by smart bombs. General Norman Schwarzkopf, the allied commander, proudly showed film of an American plane hitting an Iraqi mobile Scud missile launcher.

It never happened; or at least it was highly exaggerated. A post-war study by the CIA of 90 Scud missile launchers, claimed destroyed by the US air force in Iraq's western desert, showed that the real figure was nil. The pilots had been hitting decoys and petrol trucks on the road to Jordan.

Iraq lost some 2,500 tanks in the war, but a study by US specialists of a sample of these showed that just 10 per cent had been destroyed from the air. The rest were mostly abandoned by their crews.

This means that "punishing Saddam", the glib recommendation of US Congressional leaders is far more difficult than it looks. "In the war we had real difficulty in hitting priority targets like Saddam himself, tanks, artillery, the Republican guard divisions and the troops withdrawing from Kuwait to Basra," says one US expert.

This view is supported by a highly critical report by the General Accounting Office (GAO) a monitoring arm of the US Congress. Entitled "Operation Desert Storm: evaluation of the Air Campaign", it was published this summer in the teeth of objections from the Pentagon.

It systematically deflates the claims, made by manufacturers and the US Department of Defence alike, for the effectiveness of most weapon systems.

An advertisement for General Dynamics advertising its F16 fighter-bomber reads: "No matter what the mission, air-to-air, air-to-ground. No matter what the weather, day or night, the F16 is the premier dog fighter."

In fact, the GAO notes sourly, the ability of the F16's



Not so stealthy: A report has claimed that much of the expensive weaponry used in the Gulf War was ineffective

### LYING BY STEALTH

A comparison of statements made by the manufacturer of the F17 "Stealth" fighter-bomber with GAO findings.

**CLAIM:** Achieved "80 per cent direct hit".  
**REALITY:** The hit rate was between 50 and 80 per cent. The probability of a hit during a scheduled F-17 mission was between 41 and 60 per cent.

**CLAIM:** The "only aircraft to attack heavily defended downtown Baghdad".  
**REALITY:** Other types of aircraft frequently attacked targets in the equally heavily defended metropolitan area.

**CLAIM:** "During the first night, 30 F-17s struck 37 high-value targets, inflicting damage that collapsed Saddam's air defence system and all but insured Iraq's ability to wage co-ordinated war".  
**REALITY:** On the first night, 21 of the 37 high-value targets to which F-17s were tasked were reported hit; of these, the F-17s missed 40 per cent of their strategic air defence targets. Bomb damage assessments on 11 of the F-17 air defence targets confirmed only two complete kills. Numerous aircraft, other than the F-17, were involved in suppressing the Iraqi air defence system, which did not show a marked falloff in aircraft kills until day five.

**CLAIM:** On day one of the war, only 36 Stealth fighters (less than 2.5 per cent of the coalition's tactical assets) were in the Gulf theatre, yet they attacked 31 per cent of the 17 January targets.  
**REALITY:** The 2.5 per cent claim is based on a comparison of the F-17's to all deployed aircraft, including those incapable of dropping bombs. The F-17s represented 32 per cent of US aircraft capable of delivering bombs with warheads designed to penetrate hardened targets.

**CLAIM:** F-17 reinstated the element of surprise.  
**REALITY:** Other, non-stealthy, aircraft also achieved surprise. Stealth characteristics did not ensure surprise for all F-17 strikes; modifications in tactics in the use of support aircraft were required.

Source: General Accounting Office

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• *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 2000, 39, 10, 1273-1280.



# 15/JAPAN

## Finale for the world's most elegant use of a dead cat

The *shamisen*, one of Japan's traditional instruments, is under threat. This is good news for cats, says our correspondent in Tokyo

Of all the artifacts of traditional culture, few are so quintessentially Japanese as the musical instrument known as the *shamisen*. A three-stringed, elongated banjo with a piercing twangy note, the *shamisen* has been at the centre of traditional music for 400 years. It is the instrument played by *geisha* in their tea houses, and by musicians accompanying *kabuki* plays. Japanese music without the *shamisen* would be like a brass band without the trombone.

But recently, the unthinkable has happened: political correctness and the decline of old skills are conspiring to threaten the very existence of the ancient instrument.

The problem is this: the *shamisen*

is one of the most elegant uses ever devised for a dead cat. The instruments are hand-crafted out of various exotic materials, including mulberry, sandalwood or quince for the frame, silk for the strings, ivory and tortoise-shell for the pegs and plectrum. But the most important ingredient is the hide which is tightly stretched over the sound box - the cured skin of *Felis catus*.

For the first few centuries after its introduction from China, *shamisen* makers had little problem securing supplies of their raw material, and even after the Second World War there were 200 professional cat-nappers who kept the trade in skins. Now that number has dwindled to just two. In the whole country, there is just a single tannery capable of curing cat skins. The situation is so desperate that an association of *shamisen* makers is lobbying the government for permission to recycle a few of the hundreds of thousands of cats which are put down by their owners every year.

"This is a life-or-death problem for the traditional musical instrument," says Toshio Yamanaka, president of the Japan Musical Instrument Association (JMIA). "If things carry on as they are now, we will be handing down a pale imitation of a traditional art of public entertainment."

It is not that Japan lacks dead cats: government figures reveal that 303,000 of them were destroyed by their owners last year. The JMIA is anxiously waiting on a decision by the Tokyo city government for permission to reincarnate them in *shamisen* form, but an increasingly popular animal-rights lobby stands ranged against them.

"There is a world-wide movement in the world of medicine and science to experiment with substitute animal skins," says Yasuhiko Aida, secretary general of the Japan Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. "The same should go for cat skins for *shamisen*."

Dog skin can also be used to make *shamisen*, but only for cheaper, practice instruments. Artificial hides are constantly being improved, but professional *shamisen* players insist that there is no substitute for genuine cat.

BY RICHARD  
LLOYD PARRY

The thickness of cat skin used on *shamisen* varies subtly from the centre to the edges," says Eiji Tokiwaza, a player of traditional *shamisen* ballads. "The subtle difference gives an instrument exquisite resonance." According to Mr Yamanaka, "with current technology, you cannot reproduce the subtle irregularity of thickness and thinness out of any synthetic skin".

Desperate *shamisen* makers have tried importing substitute skins from less squeamish countries, such as China and Taiwan, but the foreign animals are not up to scratch. "It is partly because the skins of domestic cats are of a fine texture," explains Mr Yamanaka.

"Moreover, animals from different environments have a different skin quality and tanning methods vary from place to place."

Psychologically, the instrument makers have chosen a bad time to launch their campaign. Last spring, Japan was dumbstruck by the decapitation of an 11-year-old boy in Kobe. His murderer turned out to be just 14 years old. In a twist, which was widely reported and discussed, police attention was first attracted to the young murderer after he showed off to his friends the severed tongues of mutilated kittens. Perhaps understandably, the idea of harvesting cats, however worthy the cause, strikes a discordant note.



Traditional relationship: Left, a Japanese watercolour of a sleeping cat circa 1850. Right: courtesan with *shamisen* in a woodblock print of 1830

Photographs: Bridgeman Art Library

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## Threat of more terror if Pakistani gets death penalty

A Pakistani convicted of killing CIA workers faces the death penalty. The case has heightened anti-American feeling in Pakistan, where extremists killed four American oil executives and their driver this week and are threatening to kill more.



Mir Aimal Kasi: Deserves to die, says prosecution

A Pakistani man who shot CIA workers in anger over American treatment of Muslims is a merciless killer who is proud of the crime and deserves to die for it, a prosecutor said.

Under heavy security, jurors deliberated yesterday on whether to recommend the death penalty for Mir Aimal Kasi for killing CIA communications analyst Frank Darling in an ambush outside the spy agency headquarters on 25

January 1993. The jury convicted Kasi of capital murder in Darling's death. After returning the verdict, however, the jury members sent a note to Judge J Howe Brown expressing fear for their safety. The note came to light in court this week, after four US oil company employees were gunned down in an ambush in Karachi, Pakistan. A group sympathetic to Kasi

claimed responsibility for the killings and threatened more if Kasi is sentenced to death.

Outside the courthouse, Kasi's older brother, Mir Wasim Kasi, stood in a crowd and condemned the CIA killing as the work of "black" forces. He said speculation that the killings are related to Kasi's family "are an attempt to prejudice the jury, the court and the American public."

Judge Brown ordered the jury to be isolated in an unidentified hotel and kept under armed guard. They returned on Thursday under heavy police escort. The authorities said the jury has not been threatened, however, and that they had been sequestered to shield them from intense international publicity about the case.

According to trial testimony, Kasi made several confessions, each time saying the killing was vengeance for American meddling in Muslim countries.

A clinical psychologist testified that Kasi told him his only regret was not dying himself in a shootout with FBI agents who arrested him in Pakistan in 1993. "It's hard to find a man who is less unhappy about what he did than this man," he said.

Darling, 28, warned his wife to duck but could not escape himself as Kasi fired an AK-47 through the window of a car stopped at traffic lights. Darling's widow testified that she looked up to see part of her husband's head blown away.

Defence lawyer Judith Barger said Mr Kasi, 33, should get life in prison because the killing was partly explained by brain damage Kasi suffered at birth. Doctors testified for the defence that the frontal lobe of Kasi's brain shows evidence of damage.

Doctors who testified for the prosecution confirmed this, but said that it was not responsible for Kasi's behaviour.

— AP, Fairfax, Virginia



Members of the gay community in Sydney celebrating yesterday after the announcement that the city has won the right to stage the 2002 Gay Games, beating Dallas, Long Beach, Montreal and Toronto  
Photograph: AFP

## Francophone states attacked for violating press freedom

The international press watchdog, Reporters sans Frontières, has accused 16 countries taking part in this week's Francophone summit of violating press freedoms, including the host nation Vietnam. A statement issued by the Paris-based group yesterday said five journalists had been killed in Francophone countries since the organisation's last summit in 1995. Four were in Cambodia, one in Rwanda, Rwanda, Tunisia, Burundi, Lebanon, Niger, Congo and Vietnam were accused of currently holding journalists in jail.

— Reuters, Hanoi

## Prostitutes protest in India

Thousands of prostitutes from India and neighbouring countries met at a Calcutta soccer stadium for a three-day convention demanding an end to the Prevention of Immoral Traffic Act (PITA) and legalisation of their trade. "We eat by renting our bodies. We demand the rights of a worker," read a placard in a procession of 3,000 men and women.

— Reuters, Calcutta

## 1,000 dead in Somalia floods

The death toll from floods in southern Somalia has risen to more than 1,000, the United Nations Department for Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) said. A DHA spokeswoman said the floods had also displaced more than 200,000 people. The death toll, based on figures from the UN humanitarian co-ordinator in Somalia, is double that released on Thursday by an aid agency, Care International.

— Reuters, Geneva

## Teacher guilty of child rape

A former Seattle elementary school teacher who bore the child of her 14-year-old student yesterday faced a sentence of more than seven years in prison for child rape. Mary Kay LeTourneau had pleaded guilty to two counts of child rape, admitted having a sexual relationship with the boy that resulted in a daughter born in May. Her defence attorney will seek her release under a state program of mandatory psychological treatment. LeTourneau's husband has filed for divorce and moved with their four children to Alaska.

— Reuters, Seattle

## Bishop accuses Indonesia

Bishop Carlos Belo of Dili accused Indonesian security forces of acting with "incalculable brutality" against students in East Timor. Student sources said there had been at least one death in an incident on Friday in which soldiers were said to have opened fire inside the university campus in Dili, the territory's capital. Bishop Belo was jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize with Timorese resistance spokesman Jose Ramos-Horta in 1996.

— Reuters, Lisbon

## Tamils blamed for blast in Colombo

Tamil "Tiger" separatists were accused of planting explosives at a power plant outside the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo, yesterday, which plunged parts of the city into darkness.

"A small group of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) terrorists had fixed explosive devices designed to set off automatically on the fuel storage tanks of the Kelanitissa power station," the defence ministry said in a statement.

No one was injured by the blasts at the power station and two burning fuel storage tanks were quickly extinguished.

State radio quoted police as saying several people were being questioned after the attack, which came exactly one month after suspected members of the LTTE set off a massive explosion in the city's business district, killing 18 people and wounding more than 100.

There was no comment from the LTTE on the latest incident. It denied responsibility for last month's blast.

"Security forces and the

Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) officials took prompt action to douse the fire. Terrorists have failed in their attempt to destroy the power station," the defence ministry statement said.

The Defence Ministry said the authorities had re-started all the turbines at the plant. The area around the station had been sealed off as a precaution soon after the fire, and the authorities prevented people from entering or leaving the city.

Colombo has been under tight security since last month's rebel attack which damaged three hotels and several other buildings, including the twin-tower World Trade Centre. Elsewhere, at least six policemen were killed in an attack by rebels in eastern Sri Lanka on Friday, police officials said.

The LTTE is fighting for a separate homeland for minority Tamils in Sri Lanka's north and east. The government says more than 50,000 people have died in the war that began in 1983.

— Reuters, Colombo

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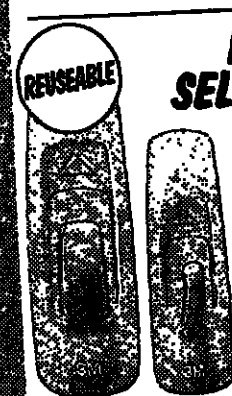


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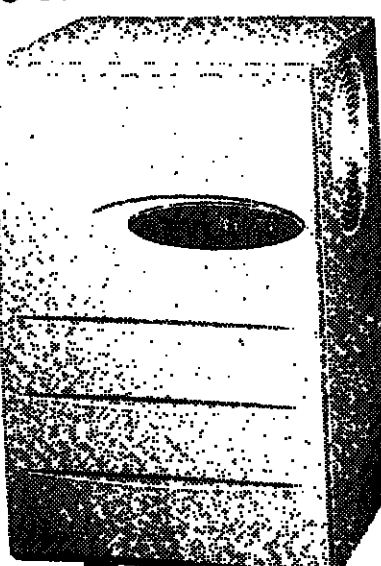
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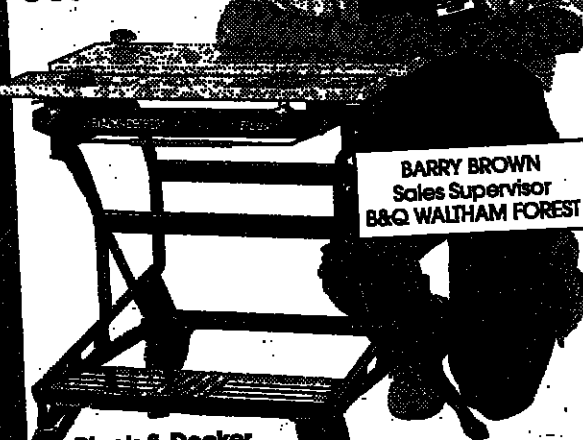
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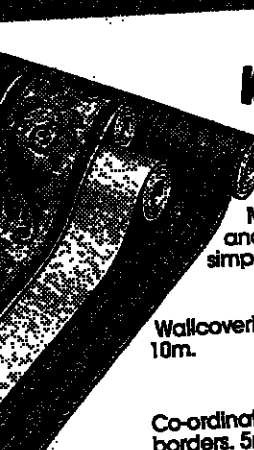
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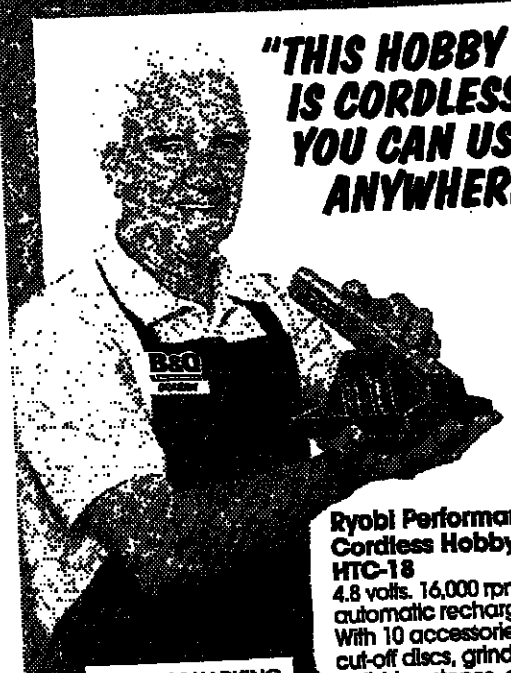
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Women Hillary won't meet: Butyrskaya jail, Moscow, where 28 women share a cell meant for eight Photograph: AFP

## The First Lady meets the President's wife

The world's cameras will be out in force today when Hillary Clinton and Naina Yeltsin meet in the Russian President's home town of Yekaterinburg. For the former, who is touring former Soviet countries, the limelight is as familiar as the air she breathes; the same cannot be said for her counterpart, who even balks at the term "First Lady".

While an invigorated Boris Yeltsin has taken to the political stage with new relish, his wife has remained in the wings. Russia still resents her predecessor, Raisa Gorbachev, whose high profile and taste for designer clothes and credit cards won her a reputation for extravagance. In conservative Russia, she was seen as bossy and assertive; the

Yeltsins have been careful to avoid the same fate.

They know they operate in a society where the perception of the female sex is frequently limited to two stereotypes. The first is that of a beautiful, young, and essentially compliant woman who struts around in a mini-skirt, ornamenting the world for the ruling males. The second is that of homely, elderly, and essentially compliant mother, who mops the sweat from her husband's brow, looks after his children, and ensures his plate is always piled high.

The fact that under the Soviet system, Russian women occupied a wide variety of professional jobs - Mrs Yeltsin herself trained as a construction engineer - has done little to change this. The idea of an

independent professional woman (a Hillary Clinton when she still insisted on the Rodham) continues to be viewed with suspicion.

At 65, exploiting the first stereotype is not open to her, so Naina Yeltsin has opted for the second. She styles herself as housewife, mother and granny, a fiercely loyal woman who occasionally breaks cover with interviews about home life with "Borya".

Although she has lashed out at her husband's foes, her public comments are usually bland. Before last year's election, she sought to woo voters with a television appearance. As the world's press waited with baited breath for a new detail that would open a door to her husband's complex character, she

revealed a secret: her recipe for chocolate cake.

Publicity photos showed her peering maternally into a pram, tasting a pot of soup, and resting her head lovingly on her husband's chest. Her boldest move to date was to agree to co-chair Russia's newly launched Culture TV channel. Cloying though it may be, this image works. Criticism of Naina Yeltsin is rare. She has said she does not want to be the "first lady". She would rather "simply be the President's wife".

Such remarks are, of course, a matter of politics. But they also have the ring of truth. For the same reasons, they are, happily, words that we are unlikely to hear on the lips of Mrs Clinton.

— Phil Reeves, Moscow

## Corruption scandal threatens close Yeltsin ally

Prosecutors in Moscow will quiz one of the government's top officials, Anatoly Chubais, chief architect of its privatisation programme and darling of Western investors, over a corruption scandal.

Mr Chubais is one of several top officials who received a \$90,000 book advance from a publishing company partly owned by a bank which is one of the biggest beneficiaries of state sell-offs. One of the five authors, Alexander Kazakov, Boris Yeltsin's first deputy chief of staff, was fired by the President yesterday, prompting rumours that Mr Chubais will suffer the same fate.

Mr Yeltsin will be loathe to lose him. He was the driving force behind his re-election campaign, and is a key contact point with Western governments and investors and international institutions, notably the International Monetary Fund.

A nervous-looking Mr Chubais, who is first deputy prime minister, appeared on television yesterday, where he admitted the fee was "high". He denies wrongdoing, however, offering to pay most of the money to a new charity, the Fund for the Protection of Private Property.

Although the book, titled *The History of Russian Privatisation*, is unpublished,

its chances of being a hot seller are seen as nil. Yesterday, the Moscow prosecutor, Sergei Gerasimov, said he intended to interrogate Mr Chubais and other officials about the payment, which was from Segodnya-Press, an affiliate of Oleximbank. The bank was recently among the winning bidders for a valuable slice of the state telecoms monopoly, Svyazinvest. The scandal is suspected as being an attempt at revenge by Boris Berezovsky, a tycoon and rival of Mr Chubais recently sacked by Mr Yeltsin. He was a losing bidder for Svyazinvest.

— Phil Reeves

## Onassis Foundation quizzed over kidnap of heiress

Athina Onassis Roussel is the richest child in the world, at 12 the sole heiress to the Onassis billions. Last week, a Swiss judge issued an arrest warrant for seven Israelis suspected of trying to kidnap her. Andrew Gumbel says investigators now believe the Israelis acted on behalf of the Onassis Foundation, the trust that manages the family fortune.



Athina Onassis: World's richest child at the centre of a struggle between her father and the foundation managing her fortune Photograph: Action Press

This is a tale where nothing is as straightforward as it seems. According to the Swiss judiciary, a crack team of Israeli security agents with connections to the intelligence community spent much of this year tracking young Athina between St Moritz and her home near Lausanne.

Their purpose, according to judicial documents leaked to the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, was to kidnap the girl "according to instructions provided by the Onassis Foundation". The price for their work: \$100,000 (£59,000). The motive: to strike a definitive blow against the ambitions of Athina's father, Thierry Roussel, who has been embroiled in a series of bitter financial disputes with the Foundation following his divorce from Athina's mother, Christina Onassis, in 1987.

At stake are the \$3bn that Athina is estimated to be worth. Christina died in mysterious circumstances in Buenos Aires a year after her divorce, and the Foundation has struggled to maintain control over the money ever since. Mr Roussel, heir to a much smaller French pharmaceutical fortune, has argued that he has a right, as Athina's legal guardian, to manage her estate until she reaches adulthood. He is one of five trustees responsible for her financial future. The other four are Greek.

There have been court cases, accusations of greed and possessiveness, and insults. Mr Roussel has been painted as a money-grubbing playboy determined to deny Athina access to her Greek heritage; he in return has complained of threats to his safety.

The kidnap theory surfaced publicly 10 days ago and was spread around Switzerland and Israel by Mr Roussel and his lawyers. According to the Swiss magistrates, the Israeli team pretended to be tourists on a mountain-biking tour of Switzerland as they prepared to swoop on the girl. Not everyone accepts this version of events, how-

ever. The Israeli police looked into the allegations, which centred on a private security firm run by former Shin Bet agents, ISC, but they soon concluded there were no grounds to prosecute. They said they believed the Israelis had been tracking Mr Roussel not with the aim of kidnapping him or his daughter, but merely to gather information that could help the Foundation in its various legal wrangles, and they dropped the case.

The Foundation accused Mr Roussel of mounting a vindictive media campaign. "This is part of his plans to freeze the girl out of the control of the trustees of her fortune even to the point of jeopardising her

safety," it said in a statement. "This is both unacceptable and dangerous."

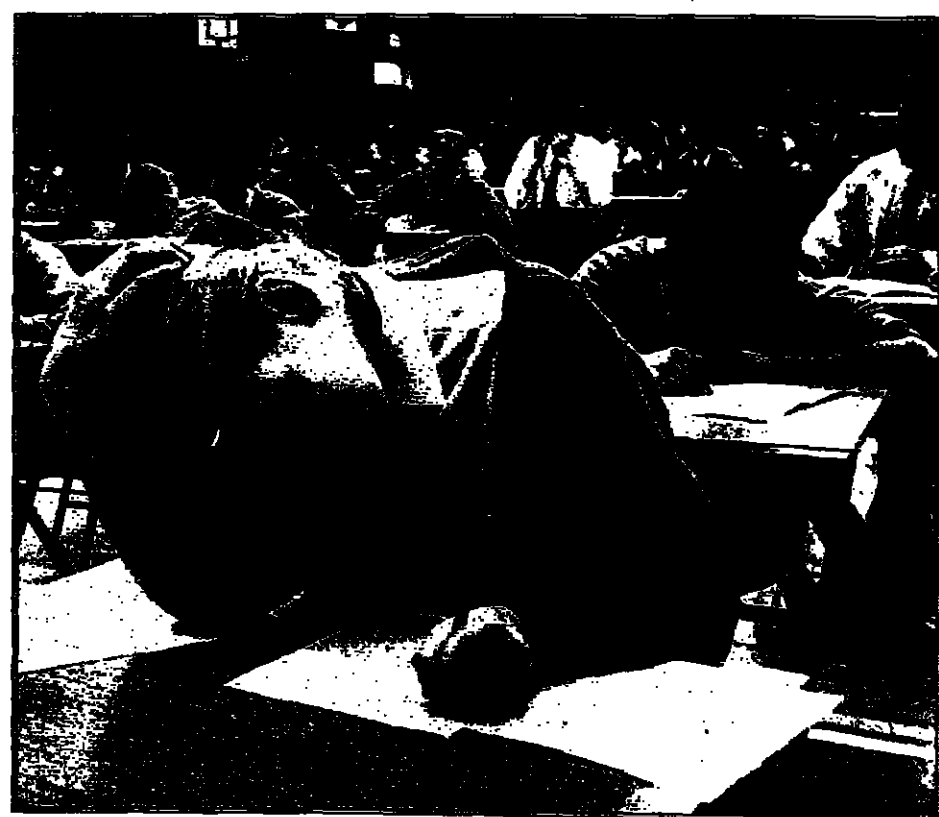
The Swiss investigating magistrate, Jacques Delieutraz, has refused to back down. Last week, he issued seven arrest warrants covering attempted kidnapping, preparatory acts to commit a crime and belonging to a criminal organisation.

On Monday, one of the Israelis, Ronen Balulu, was picked up in Milan and is expected to be extradited to Switzerland. It is not clear what, if anything, he has told the police.

Yesterday, the Onassis Foundation did not want to comment further. It said a formal statement would be issued on Monday.

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## Paul Daniel: don't bring the curtain down on the ENO

Paul Daniel is running the English National Opera at the most threatening moment in its history. In his first interview since taking over the helm, he tells David Lister why the company isn't ready to quit the Coliseum.

After tonight's premiere of Verdi's *Falstaff*, Paul Daniel, music director and acting artistic head of ENO, will come on stage and make a political speech. It will begin: "Ladies and gentlemen, you have seen tonight what it is that makes this company unique..." He has been making that same speech after almost every performance for the past highly charged fortnight. He usually gets a thunderous ovation.

After several years of largely self-inflicted wounds, there is a buzz about the ENO again. Its audience figures are up, it is reacquainting itself with critical acclaim for standards of production and musical direction. It has dropped its deeply unpopular plan to apply for lottery money to leave the Coliseum and fund a new building outside the West End. And it has won lottery money to help pay off its deficit and make a fresh start financially.

And then along comes the Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, with a proposal that the ENO should leave the Coliseum and move into the Royal Opera House, which it would then have to share with both the Royal Opera and the Royal Ballet.

The ENO's loyal followers and its staff are appalled, fearing that a move to Covent Garden could lose it both its audience and its distinct identity - opera in English at reasonable prices (£2.50 balcony to £55 best stalls), nurturing home-grown talent, developing links with the community through much-praised education work, and championing new opera in its contemporary opera studio.

The Culture Secretary's proposals have to pass through Sir Richard Eyre's review committee, where they could still, in theory, be modified or even radically altered. But there is

already a growing feeling of sympathy with the ENO, the feeling that they may have been dragged into the Government's determination to sort out Covent Garden, and may have been unjustly tarred with the same brush of managerial incompetence and profligacy - ironic when you consider that ENO has just had a massive vote of confidence in the form of a £4.5m stabilisation award from the Arts Council.

And just at the time when the ENO needs a political streetfighter to lead its campaign to stay in its home, it finds itself without a general director following the resignation of Dennis Marks in September. And so the 39-year-old conductor Paul Daniel, who only arrived from Opera North in August, now finds himself in the bear pit of politics.

It sounds like a walkover for Mr Smith - until you meet Paul Daniel, and realise that the company, in its hour of need, has almost by accident found itself a most sincere and persuasive advocate and ambassador, with an honesty and openness that those more experienced in cultural politics tend sometimes to mislay over the years.

Paul Daniel is a tall, skinny enthusiast, his prematurely greying curls contradicted by a boyishly youthful face. He is hard to interrupt, so passionate is he in his championing of the ENO, where he began his operatic career back in 1982, before moving on to become music director first of Opera Factory in 1987 and then of Opera North, in Leeds, in 1990.

It must, I suggest, be odd to be thrust into such a political hotbed only weeks after returning to ENO as its new music director. "Yes, I don't do much music at the moment," he replies a little sadly, "and I'm not a politician. But something really interesting is happening. It's like in a war. What has hit me in the face with this company is the intensity of feeling within. The people here are all pulling together, though we don't actually know who we are fighting. The Treasury? No. Public taste? No. The Press? Certainly not. And absolutely certainly not Covent Garden. I'm determined this will not become a 'them and us' situation. They need as much

support as we can give them and vice versa."

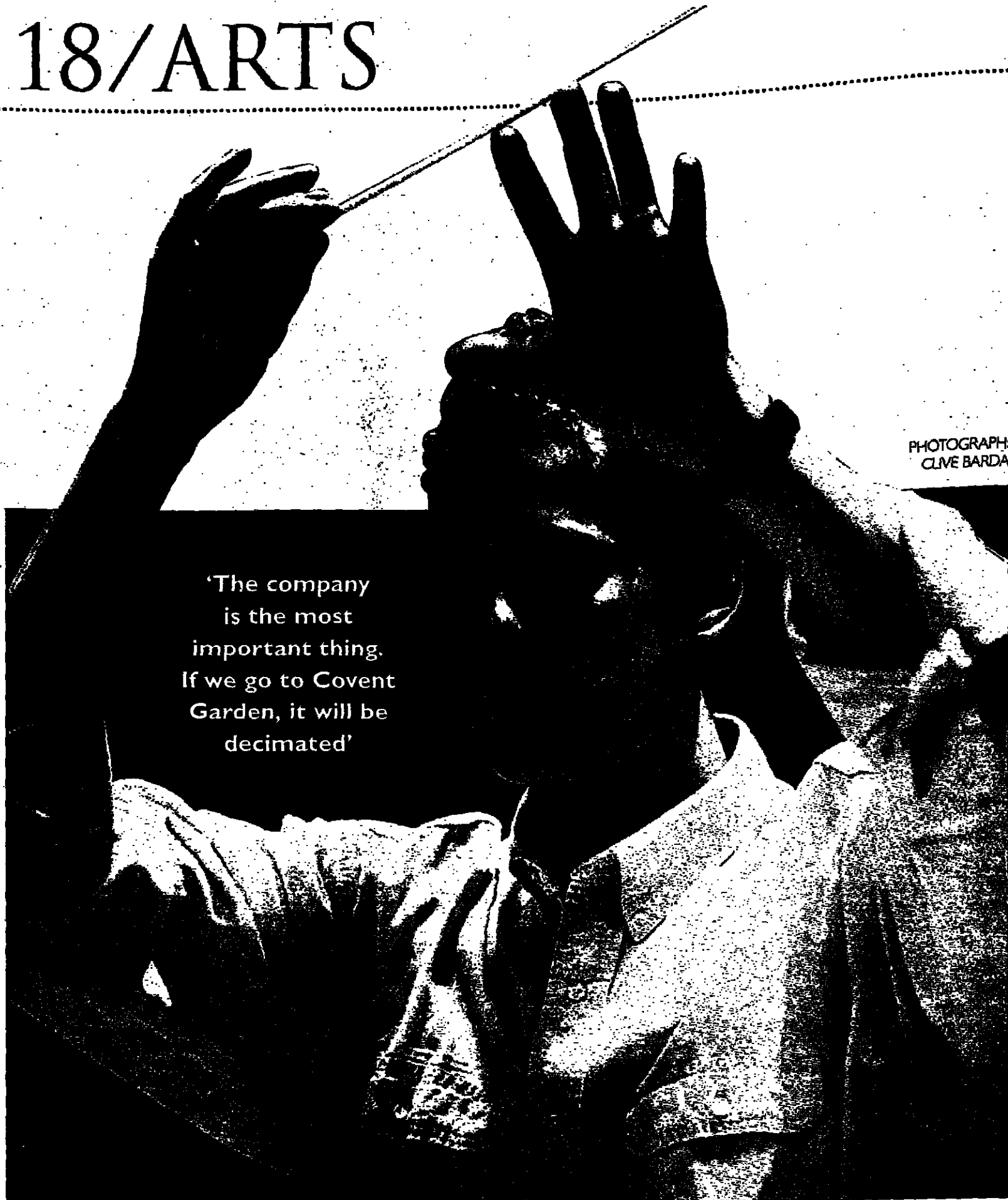
Daniel, a newcomer to the rough-and-tumble and even sheer bad manners of politics, is still angry at the speed of the Smith announcement. "Our staff should not have woken up to hear me talking about it on the *Today* programme. That is not the way things should happen or people should be treated in the real world."

But now that he has digested the Smith proposal, he is intense and forthright in his dismissal of it. "The company is the most important thing. But if we go to Covent Garden, the company will be decimated. How do you identify with a company which is in a building for a bit, and in a caravan for the other bit, or indeed out of work? Our evidence will be that we need our base."

Yet, even giving proper evidence to the Eyre inquiry strikes him as requiring a leap of logic. "How can we comment on the Smith proposal? We don't know what is going to be in the new Covent Garden opera house. We haven't seen the plans. If they have got any sense, they will have made it work for the Royal Opera and Royal Ballet. There may not be things like sufficient office space for another company, orchestra rehearsal space, set storage, all manner of things. I've worked at the Royal Opera House and it's bad enough having to share it with the Royal Ballet. Ask Amsterdam what happens when you try to merge companies."

Merge? Isn't that the dreaded word everyone is avoiding, and Smith is positively ruling out? Again, Daniel is too honest to ignore its likelihood. "Of course some of the activities would merge. The box-office, for example. Our box-office staff are bursting with what this company stands for. But what happens when you've one batch of box-office people? You've lost one of your best lobbying groups."

The lobbying group for the ENO is likely to be a vociferous one. But it, like Daniel, has certain questions to answer. And he does not dodge them. First, there is Chris Smith's strongest argument: the lack of touring by supposedly national companies. Daniel admits: "It is a problem that the company is



PHOTOGRAPH: CLIVE BARDA

'The company is the most important thing. If we go to Covent Garden, it will be decimated'

called English National Opera and is not seen to be national. But people forget two things. Opera North actually started out as English National Opera North and it fulfils that role. Also, it was the Arts Council that stopped ENO touring in the Eighties, so that there could be 'spheres of influence' for small-scale companies."

Nevertheless he is clearly aware of the perceived anomaly and says that the company is exploring both touring and a short residency outside London.

Then there is the awkwardness for the ENO that, up until recently, its management was telling the world how much they wanted a new theatre and to get out of the Coliseum - the same Coliseum in which they are now so keen to remain and which their audiences so adore.

Thankfully, that particular

piece of foolishness is now history. Daniel explains: "If you're offered the chance of having a study to see if you could do better, then you take that chance. Of course you take money to investigate a theatre where you could perform every single night of the year. But the new building is off the agenda. The Coliseum has enormous strengths, marvellous sightlines, and it's always acknowledged that it's the best from the audience's point of view."

There is also the not unappealing argument that the Coliseum would make an admirable national dance house. Daniel does not duck this. "First, I would say that the English National Ballet (who do a regular season at the Coliseum) has been ignored in all of this. ENB is important. A dance house is part of the delicate equation. We

can use that. We can do things. If the dance season happens during Christmas weeks, that gives us the opportunity to do other things in other places."

It is a slightly guarded answer. But it would seem to suggest the possibility of a Coliseum housing the ENO but giving more weeks to dance.

Daniel also has to face the fact that the last music director (Sian Edwards) resigned with no explanation, as did the last general director - not a signal to the public of a wholly stable company. "Yes, I can see that," he answers. "But that makes my job doubly important, because I have got to stand up and fight for what I believe in."

I put to him one other problem. For all the talk of ENO identity, it seemed to have, with its radical, updated interpretations, a much more distinct

identity in the Eighties, during the so-called "Power House" era of the Pountney/Elder/Jonas regime. Daniel is bullish on that one. "OK, what was it? And how many productions can you name that made that identity? In fact, it lasted about four years, that period in which people knew they were on a roller-coaster ride."

And, he implies, our collective memory does play some tricks. "David Alden was nothing to do with the Power House regime. *Rigoletto* [Jonathan Miller's perennial New York mafia production] came out of George Harewood's regime. It's important to remember that this company had a much longer evolution. And actually there's a much stronger sense of people here knowing what they stand for than they did in the Eighties."

Even when he returns full-time to musical duties, Daniel is not looking for change for its own sake. "Musical standards here are very high. I think revolution is a very mediocre way of behaving," he says somewhat memorably.

He is adamant that he will not be applying for the vacant general director's post. He wants to concentrate on music direction when this crisis is over. Perhaps music and politics don't mix easily.

Now it is his turn to interrupt. "But music has always been political. Verdi was political. He emptied theatres."

Matthew Warchus's new ENO production of Verdi's *Falstaff* opens at 7.30pm tonight at the London Coliseum, St Martin's Lane, WC2 (0171-632 8300)

### THE WEEK IN THE ARTS DAVID LISTER

It was a curious speech by the arts minister, Mark Fisher, to museum directors urging them to learn from Harvey Nichols, Marks & Spencer and Tesco in exploiting retail space, and opening outlets in high streets and at airports. Hackles were raised among the great and the good in the audience at the Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC) conference. Most were astonished at being asked by a Labour minister to ape a luxury Knightsbridge store. "Is this the Diana factor?" muttered one distinguished director. I found an even more perplexed gentleman during the coffee break after Mr Fisher's speech. He told me, shaking his head in consternation: "I don't mind the Harvey Nichols reference. But it's a bit much being asked to emulate Tesco." The gentleman in question is a board member of the National Gallery. His name: Simon Sainsbury.

Meanwhile, research into museum admission policies carried out by the Central Office of Information for the MGC proclaims that "only 4 per cent of those who do not visit museums cite admission charges as a barrier". With the Government about to make a policy statement on charging and national museums, this finding, emphasised in the MGC press release, could well be ammunition for them to embrace charging. But it doesn't take too much reflection to wonder about the importance of such a finding. Surely, the key group of people are the 55 per cent of the public interviewed who do go to museums. Would they be put off by an admission charge? This group was not asked for their views on charging. Apparently such a question to them would have been too loaded. David Barrie, the director of the National Art Collections Fund, which is passionate in its support of free admission, says: "It seems to me that there are two crucial questions that have yet to receive a clear answer. Will charges affect the total number of visitors? And will visitors be deterred from repeat visits?" Precisely. Without those two pieces of

information, this much-heralded research falls short.

Examples of catering abuse at arts venues continue to come in, with complaints of allegedly exorbitant prices for interval snacks. But price sensitivity is clearly pitched at different levels across the country. One reader writes to complain of a 90p Cornetto at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, but I have to tell him that in London that would be considered cheap. Mrs Gwen Bradley shares my distaste with prices at the Royal Albert Hall in London after she purchased a snack of "two plates of smoked salmon on dry brown bread buns, with a small amount of garnish and a few Tortilla chips". The cost was £12. She wrote to the management to inquire whether a mistake had been made. She received a reply from the caterers Letheby & Christopher confirming that the price was the correct amount and assuring her "it is only by receiving such letters as yours that we can strive to improve the service that we offer". I hope they strive quickly. For that price, I could take the coach to Leeds and enjoy a Cornetto.



### THE WEEK ON RADIO ROBERT HANKS

## When Hardy turns softy

The big problem about being an angry young man - or, indeed, woman - is knowing what to do when you're not so young any more. Occasionally, a young man will stay angry, like John Osborne, who well into middle age seethed at a pitch that few of us rarely achieve even momentarily. For most, though, as the imperfections of world and self seep in, it's easier just to mellow. And this seems to be what's happening to Jeremy Hardy.

Not very long ago he was one of the tetchiest comedians around, incandescent with loathing for the political right and contempt for the complacent centre; the last series but one of *Jeremy Hardy Speaks to the Nation* supposedly provoked more complaints than any other programme on Radio 4 that year. A right-wing Labour government ought to have stoked him up to new frenzies.

*Power and How to Get It* (R4, Wed) contains its share of anti-Blair jokes - among the issues he promises to tackle in this series is "How a Tory politician gets to be leader [significant pause]... of the Labour Party"; but the whole thing feels dispiritingly off the boil.

Partly, this is because Hardy is disconcerted by the business of interviewing. A little too much of the programme consists of disclaimers and confes-

sions of incompetence - so that when John Nott, defence secretary during the Falklands War, tells him that the war did this country a great deal of good, we hear Hardy in voice-over apologising for failing to put the obvious follow-up question, viz, what good was that?

But this itself is a symptom of how Hardy has lost his edge. He is no longer propelled forwards by indignation; lacking that momentum, many of his jokes hang limp in the air - quips are stuck on to a topic, rather than developing from it.


I'm in danger of overdoing the disappointment here: he is still funnier and far more politically astute than most other contemporary comics; but this is below par. Fortunately, there are still comics with reserves of fury to draw on. Chris Morris, the darling prankster of *On the Hour*, sacked from his Radio 1 solo show after announcing the deaths of, *inter alia*, Jimmy Savile and Michael Heseltine, is back, as chilly and acid as ever. His new project is called *Blue Jam* - one of his less appealing trademarks is a tendency to come up with phrases (another was "infinite misery jumper") that sound like early Seventies progressive rock groups.

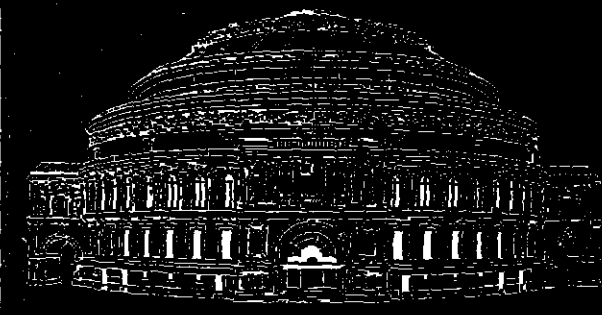
*Blue Jam* (R1, Thurs) is not especially funny (Morris's strength is that he will pursue

an idea or a mood to excess and beyond, but the result is often too harsh or too odd to make you laugh). But it is hypnotically fascinating, and formally the most radical thing I have heard in years: a tightly edited mix of music loops and samples, over which Morris and chums perform weird and even vicious sketches (a doctor cures every ailment - including genital sores - with a big kiss) interspersed with a selection of incongruously mellow records.

If it's funny you're after, though, stick to *On the Town with the League of Gentlemen* (R4, Thurs), a surreal sketch show set in a dead-end northern town and featuring such characters as Bob/Barbara, a taxi-driver caught in mid-sex change, the masturbation-obsessed Uncle Harvey (who rebukes his nephew for spending too much time with "Madame Palm and her five lovely daughters") and an incompetent vet with the catchphrase "I've got some rather upsetting news".

At first hearing, it is nothing out of the ordinary, but it has the same cumulative effect as *The Fast Show*, coupled with a pleasingly grotesque sensibility and an underlying awareness of human unpleasantness that makes it seem not just funnier than the Jeremy Hardy series, but politically more astute.

  
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# 19/SATURDAY STORY

THE INDEPENDENT  
SATURDAY  
15 NOVEMBER 1997

## The little man from nowhere who made it ever so big

**Bernie Ecclestone has caused the Labour government its biggest headache to date. Yet few outside motor racing really know him because his passion for wheeling and dealing is cloaked in obsessive secrecy. Behind the intrigue is a tale of extraordinary ruthlessness**

No one seems very clear about exactly how much money Bernie Ecclestone has given to the Labour Party (or for that matter to the Conservatives) in recent times. The fact is not surprising. No one seems very clear about anything relating to the pugnacious little man who began life, it is said, as a gas fitter, and has made himself the world's highest paid executive, transforming Formula One motor-racing in the process into the world's biggest sport after football.

Admittedly much has been written about him. About his Lear Jet, his sumptuous homes in Chelsea and Gstaad and his glass-palace office (with indoor swimming pool) overlooking Hyde Park. About his 6ft 2in former model wife, Slavica, who is almost 30 years his junior as well as 11 inches taller, and who, for tax reasons, owns 80 per cent of his businesses. About the £29.7m he earned in 1994, the largest year's salary ever recorded in Britain. And about his socialising with rock stars such as Chris de Burgh and leading politicians such as Kenneth Clarke. Not to mention his entertainment of Tony Blair and sons, who were whiskered round Silverstone by no less a chauffeur than Damon Hill.

And yet, in spite of all the newspaper articles, a cloud of secrecy hangs around how exactly how he made his vast fortune. No one even seems sure of his origins. His father is variously described as a trowler-skinner, and an engineer. He is reported as having been born in Suffolk – and in Kent. His early money is said to have been made from a motorcycle business, but also from car auctions and from property deals. What is beyond doubt is the

change he has wrought in motor-racing. Thirty years ago Grand Prix cars were bolted together in lock-up garages and driven by gentlemen amateurs or Latin daredevils. Team managers such as Frank Williams were so strapped for cash that he was once forced to conduct his affairs from a public telephone box. Today the sport is a \$1bn a year industry, regularly watched in more than 200 countries with 27,000 hours of Grand Prix television attracting a global audience of 45 million.

Bernie Ecclestone controls it all. He is president of the Formula One Constructors' Association (FOCA) which represents the teams. He is vice-president of the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) the sport's governing body. His companies include Formula One Promotions and Administrations (FOPA) which strikes the

BY PAUL VALLELY

deals with the circuits and which alone has made him £30m over the past three years. Other companies – in which he also owns 99 per cent of the shares – control packages for TV stations and ring-side hospitality. "Bernie runs the sport like his personal fiefdom," said one Formula One insider. "He even controls the parking bays."

His business empire is based at the historic Battle of Britain aerodrome, Biggin Hill. There FOPA makes the electronic gadgetry used to produce the exhilarating on-board television pictures of Grand Prix races. But his money is earned working 16-hour days behind the tinted windows of the long, sleek, grey executive coach known as Bernie's Bus which dominates the paddock at every Grand Prix circuit. It is there that an endless stream of drivers, agents, team proprietors and circuit managers conduct the unending succession of deals which are Ecclestone's meat and drink. His appetite for deals – always conducted in deadly secret – is formidable.

He has made enemies on the way. Environmental protesters in Australia, he claims, once threatened to shoot him, and the sport is consumed with apocryphal tales about the unhappy fate of those who crossed Bernie. But he has made friends too. The huge amount of money he has brought into the sport, transforming obscure engineers into multi-millionaire managing directors of race teams, produces an intense loyalty. None of them will say anything in public against him. Formula One is like a secret society, and Bernie Ecclestone is its godfather, albeit one who now craves the respectability of the knightship he hopes his political donations will one day buy him.

Ecclestone began in motor-racing by driving Formula Three 500cc single-seater cars against drivers like Stirling Moss. But an accident in 1951 put an end to his ambitions behind the wheel and he turned to management. In 1958 he bought the Connaught Formula One team and later the troubled Brabham team which included stars like Graham Hill, Niki Lauda and Nelson Piquet.

As a team proprietor he got a seat on FOCA where the old-style racing impresario Lord Hesketh recalls him entering like a whirlwind. Until then the sport had been controlled by the race organisers who negotiated with driving teams individually. Ecclestone persuaded the teams to negotiate together and within a few years the whip hand had passed from the circuits to him. (How the increased fees were divided between him and the teams was, and is, a closely guarded secret.) More recently Ecclestone has taken to asking fees which the organisers cannot raise, whereupon his company FOPA takes over as promoter – a strategy which earned him £16m in 1994 alone.

Next he tried to persuade the teams to set up a company to take over trackside advertising. When they said no he encouraged Paddy McNally, the sometime squire of the Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson, to set up a business. The relationship between the two men remains, like so much in Ecclestone's life, mysterious.



Happy couple: Bernie Ecclestone with his wife Slavica

Photograph: Absolute

But Bernie openly lobbies for McNally's company which earns more than £4m a year.

After that came a firm to sell corporate hospitality in luxury lobster and champagne marquees in the paddocks behind the pits where firms pay £1,000 a head for their guests to rub shoulders with the grimy and the glamorous.

But it was his deal in the mid-Eighties with the European Broadcast Union which was the clincher. It represents all major European TV stations with a combined audience of 375 million. To get permission to cover their local Grand Prix every station had to guarantee to broadcast all the races – and live. As soon as that happened sponsorship flooded in and Formula One cars became the fastest cigarette packets in the world. Marlboro now pays McLaren more than \$35m a year and Ferrari around \$20m. Rothmans, Mild Seven and Benson & Hedges all contribute towards an industry total of \$160m a year.

From there on it was just a question of upping the ante. Ecclestone switched Formula One from BBC1 – which was paying £7m – to ITV, which offered 10 times as much. In 1993 he did a secret deal with Max Mosley, the president of the FIA which owns the Grand Prix television rights, to allow Ecclestone to administer them for the next 25 years – and for himself rather than the teams. He moved into discussions with Rupert Murdoch aimed at expanding satellite TV coverage of the increasingly popular sport with the advent of digital pay-TV next year. He has invested more than £30m of his own money in the digital revolution – a move which, he told the racing journalist Martin Jacques in an interview in *Esquire* last year, he expects to yield more than £600m within five years. Such projections led him to explore the possibility of floating Formula One on the stock exchange, a move which his advisers Salomon Brothers suggest could yield £1.5bn.

All of this has raised eyebrows as well as cash. The deal with Mosley has attracted the attention of the European Commission. In 1983 – when the FIA was still a rival to Ecclestone – he persuaded its

then president, Jean-Marie Balestre, to give a job to a Bernie sidekick Max Mosley, the son of the fascist leader Sir Oswald Mosley. When Balestre eventually confided in Ecclestone was Mosley suggested that the best way to neutralise Ecclestone was to co-opt him as FIA vice-president. Shortly after Mosley stood down as president. The TV deal followed.

But there were three obstacles to Ecclestone's money-printing flotation. The first was a row within the industry. The division of the television cash had traditionally been governed by something called the Concorde Agreement. But three teams – Williams, McLaren and Tyrrell – have been refusing to sign the latest version. Where they had not been in a strong position with Ecclestone in the past, the flotation, originally planned to coincide with the British Grand Prix in July, gave the teams a valuable lever in negotiations. Last week industry insiders were saying that Bernie the Bargainer was now close to a deal with the three rebel teams.

The second stumbling block for the flotation plans was political. A threat by the European Union to outlaw sports sponsorship by tobacco companies was being blocked by Germany, Holland, Greece and the UK. They constituted an EU veto. But if one country changed its mind the veto would crumble. The manifesto promise of New Labour threatened to bring that about – until the generous political donor Ecclestone, aided by the FIA director-general, David Ward (a former adviser to the late Labour leader John Smith), managed to persuade the new government to change its mind and exempt Formula One in circumstances which have produced the biggest controversy yet faced by Tony Blair.

Only the third obstacle remains. Karel Van Miert, the EU competition commissioner, is said to believe that excessively long exclusive contracts – such as the 25-year TV deal – are anti-competitive. Doubtless Bernie Ecclestone is working on him even now.

### NEXT WEEK IN THE INDEPENDENT

#### MONDAY

Deborah Ross interviews Martin Bell  
MEDIA+: the one real winner from the Woodward case



#### TUESDAY

The Fairies show the Royal Academy – magical or not?  
NETWORK+: Ralph Nader campaigns in cyberspace



#### WEDNESDAY

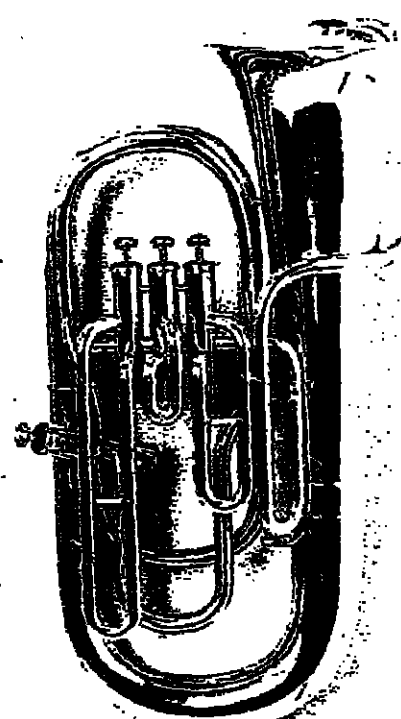
Beloved and Bonk – more iffy moments from the diary of a divorce

#### THURSDAY

EDUCATION+: Which instrument should your child learn? Roy Hattersley – an advertisement for the state system?

#### FRIDAY

THE EYE 28 pages of music, film and theatre



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## Let's ban the cudgels and have a fair fight on the news-stands



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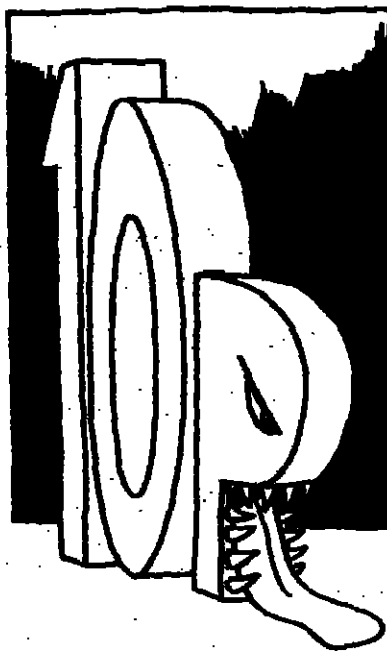
This week Rupert Murdoch turned petulant, saying there was "no way" he would call a truce in the newspaper price war. "No one else wants to call a truce, they insult me every day, so they can go to hell," he said. See you there, Rupert. Then, with the breathtaking ability to declare that black is white which has got him where he is today, he added: "People don't seem to like competition much in this country."

Competition, eh? Well, there is competition in a civil society, and there is the law of the cudgel, and they are different things. There is competition which widens consumer choice, and there is the abuse of power. Over the past four years, when Mr Murdoch first started cutting the price of *The Times*, readers of all newspapers have undoubtedly benefited from lower prices. Your pockets win, the publishers' pockets lose. Last year the combined losses of the four broadsheets and their Sunday siblings came to £50m, give or take an undisclosed sum or two. But Mr Murdoch is not engaged in philanthropy, exerting a downward pressure on prices in order to bring Britain's high-quality press within reach of everyone. He wants to commandeer market share, rather than

compete for it on quality and performance grounds. It is one of the first lessons of economics that price wars are not usually good for consumers in the long run.

But the main reason we need a change in the existing competition law is not that we, or any other newspaper, are in order to survive. It is a matter of principle that Mr Murdoch's predatory pricing should be made illegal in this country, as it is in the United States and Australia, to take two competition-loving countries at random. That is why we and our owners are supporting amendments to the Competition Bill which were debated in the House of Lords on Thursday.

Predatory pricing is hard to define and hard to legislate against. But British competition law has been too weak for too long. It is perfectly possible to give regulators the power to stop price cuts that are likely to lead to a reduction in consumer choice. The present law has two defects. First, the real restrictions on price-cutting only come into play if they are an abuse of a "dominant" position in a particular market. Because Rupert Murdoch does not control an overwhelming share of the newspaper market



(he controls something short of 40 per cent of national newspaper circulation), the Office of Fair Trading ruled that his price cuts were a "reasonable commercial strategy". The fact that he is using a dominant position in the satellite television market to fund his ambition to become dominant in the newspaper market was deemed irrelevant. Second, the regulatory system is far too slow in reacting to the fast and often misleading footwork of the likes of Mr Murdoch. As Lord McNally told the House: "In the newspaper industry it isn't enough for a victim to be bleeding. Apparently our present legislation requires a corpse before the Office of Fair Trading will act."

It was disappointing that Lord McNally, a Liberal Democrat, and Viscount Astor, a Conservative, should have needed to table amendments. The Labour manifesto promised as "an early priority" that the Government would "adopt a tough 'prohibitive' approach to deter anti-competitive practices and abuses of market power". Just before the manifesto was published, Tony Blair undermined it by politely asking the owner of *The Sun* to exercise his great power "responsibly", adding elliptically: "I'd like to see a situation where that happens not by legislation..." Well, Tony, it is no use relying on voluntary restraint from this brand of monopolist. You can forget that forlorn fantasy.

When the Competition Bill was published it contained not so much a U-turn as a series of ominous omissions. One in particular was the failure to recognise that the media is a special case in competition law. In the balance between price and diversity, diversity should count for more in a healthy democracy. What that means, boiled down, is that if this newspaper did not exist it would be a good idea – for the democratic health of the country – if it were commercially practicable to invent it.

The opportunity for the Government to steel its position remains. On Thursday, the Government put out Lord Haskel to read out an anodyne brief in reply to Lord McNally. There is plenty of time before the Bill's next stage for Lord Simon, along with Margaret Beckett and Mr Blair, to think again. We are looking, too, to those prominent Labour politicians who were so vocal in defence of our view before the election to voice their real views again, now that they are in power: step forward Robin Cook. Mo Mowlam, Chris Smith, and others. Mr Murdoch said he wasn't worried by the prospect of American-style anti-monopoly laws. Take him at his word.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Branson and FI

Sir: I have immense admiration for Richard Branson and am as opposed to tobacco advertising as he is, but instead of blindly criticising Tony Blair's decision ("Keep your promises or lose my backing", 13 November), he should recognise it for what it is: harsh but pragmatic.

Formula One should not be given exemption for all time from a ban on tobacco sponsorship; it should be given, say, three years to find alternative sponsors. Richard Branson has the means to sponsor Formula One himself; he should put his immense wealth where his well-intentioned mouth is. PETER BRADSHAW  
*Liverpool*

Sir: So Richard Branson feels "let down" by Labour because of Formula One tobacco sponsorship.

Is this the same Richard Branson who runs Virgin Cross Country trains? The same trains which include a smoking coach, the gaseous contents of which pervade the adjacent coaches? The same trains which force non-smokers to sit in a foul atmosphere because of lack of seats in the non-smoking coaches?

Branson should decide which side of the fence he wants to be on. A WINSOR  
*Newcastle upon Tyne*

Sir: The search for funding for political parties must end at a source which is unidentified, freely given, forgotten, without ties. I have no idea of the sums involved, but the unclaimed prizes from the National Lottery would seem a candidate. ANY TAKERS?  
MIKE MYERS  
*Knaresborough, North Yorkshire*

Sir: Am I the only person who objects to tobacco industry sponsorship of Formula One on the grounds that it encourages young smokers to develop anti-social and reckless driving habits with attendant dangers for passive drivers such as myself? STEPHEN SENN  
*Hampden, Hertfordshire*

### Tagging lessons

Sir: The Prison Reform Trust has always been sceptical about the electronic monitoring of offenders. But in the light of the Home Secretary's announcement that tagging is to be extended (report, 13 November), the impressions I gained recently in Norfolk as the guest of the tagging company Geografix may be of interest.

Those tagged in Norfolk have included a small number of women and one elderly sex offender, but the majority have been offenders familiar to any criminal justice caseload – unemployed men in their 20s and 30s, convicted, not for the first time, of offences of dishonesty or drunken violence. Although there was initial opposition from sentencers, curfew orders subject to tagging are now increas-

ingly being used in the Norfolk courts. A success rate of around 90 per cent is claimed, and some key findings about best use of the tag have now emerged.

First, the periods of curfew must be realistic. If they are too long, then offenders are simply being set up to fail.

Second, the tag alone achieves very little unless it is backed up with other forms of help (Geografix has been surprised by the relationships those tagged have built up with its monitoring staff).

Third, the relatives of those tagged have not, in general, objected to their homes being turned into an extension of the penal sphere. Tagging does introduce an element of structure into lives which may otherwise be fractured and disorganised.

I was also impressed by the reports provided for the courts, at the end of sentence, on every tagged offender. This practice ought to be extended to every order imposed by the courts.

Of course, not everyone takes to the tag. Almost all offenders try to tamper with it in some way and I was told of one who tried to bribe his monitoring officers and of another who deposited all the electronic hardware in the Norfolk Broads. And it remains open to question whether tagging represents a sensible investment of public money compared with other sanctions.

Although tiny in scale at the moment, tagging also raises the spectre of far more pervasive state surveillance. I am told that the state of Texas is planning to launch its own satellite to tag the whereabouts of up to 500,000 of its citizens. STEPHEN SHAW  
*Director, Prison Reform Trust, London EC1*

### Tibet's agony

Sir: Angela Lewis ("Whose freedom is it anyway?", 13 November) attacks the integrity of film and pop stars who support the Tibet movement. Her disdain should not extend to the justification for that support.

Does she need reminding that more than a million Tibetans have died and over 6,000 monasteries been destroyed since the Chinese invasion in 1950 (the events of which are dramatised in *Seven Years in Tibet*). Or that the current regime continues to repress and imprison those who speak out against the occupation – such as Ngawang Sangdrol, a 20-year-old nun serving an 18-year jail sentence for singing nationalist songs and shouting "Free Tibet!"

If there is a risk that the freeing of Tibet will, as Angela Lewis hypothesises, lead to the outbreak of World War III, then perhaps we had all better turn a blind eye and leave Ngawang Sangdrol and hundreds more political prisoners, including the eight-year-old Panchen Lama, to rot in jail. ALISON REYNOLDS  
*Director, Free Tibet Campaign*  
PATRICK NASH  
*Director, Tibet Society, London N1*



The red grouse: victim of uncontrolled birds of prey?

Photograph: Planet Earth

### Blame the sheep

Sir: Duff Hart-Davis reports (8 November) the findings of the Langholm report *Birds of Prey and Red Grouse*, recently launched in Edinburgh. The results were not in dispute. On Langholm as soon as the raptors received their proper legal protection they increased, the red grouse failed to peak and in a season when 2,000-4,000 might be expected to be shot there were fewer than 100 bagged.

However this should not cause the knee-jerk reaction of attempting to manage (kill) the rare raptors. We should rather address the underlying ecological reasons for the lack of grouse for the guns.

At the Edinburgh launch I asked about moor C, a moor in the Highlands of comparable size to Langholm. Here the protection of the raptors did not cause a huge increase and the grouse numbers held up well. This moor was dominated by heather and did not have the massive grazing pressure of sheep experienced for many years at Langholm.

The sheep in Langholm have been responsible for altering the balance between the heather and the red grouse. Conversion of heather to grass encourages the small birds, particularly meadow pipits, and small mammals that the heather eat and makes conditions for the red grouse worse. This problem

is well understood by many ecologists. Scottish Natural Heritage hopes to come to an arrangement with the Department of Agriculture to apply money from funds such as Environmentally Sensitive Area schemes to solve it. It would be good to see European money being used to redress a wrong caused by headage payments under the Common Agricultural Policy.

Traditional management techniques which are good for red grouse are much better for other species than over-grazing by sheep or red deer or, heaven forbid, the swamping of the hills with a dense mass of exotic conifers. CHRIS MEAD  
*Thetford, Norfolk*

### BSE inquiry

Sir: You report (10 November) that the Minister of Agriculture is considering demands for a public inquiry into links between BSE in cattle and CJD in humans. Although the Government may have changed, the members of Whitehall who were involved with the BSE blunders have not. We simply must find out what happened with BSE.

Why was no calculated risk assessment carried out? How were people picked as advisers who knew little about the science of the disease? Why was

selective advice from scientists used for decision-making and how? Why was information given to the public misleading?

Regulations were not enforced; research was actually curtailed; infected bovine feed was knowingly exported; pharmaceutical companies were advised not to research methods of treatment; the EU was told that there was no risk.

UK agriculture has sailed ahead of the world so it is not surprising that we hit the rocks first. A judicial inquiry is the way to avoid this for the future. Attempts by a new Food Standards

Authority, for instance, may be inadequate. It will not be able to subpoena witnesses. Dr STEPHEN DEALLER  
*Consultant Medical Microbiologist, Burnley General Hospital*

### Smoking in US

Sir: I was born and raised in America, and I have never seen this "American-style" smoking ban in any of our bars (letter, 14 November). I do know that a ban was tried in Toronto in restaurants and was a complete flop. Most of our restaurants have no-smoking areas, but I have never seen a restaurant that you could not smoke in. MICHAEL S MAXSON  
*Toledo, Ohio, US*

### Church 'destruction'

Sir: The passion for church re-ordering in Surrey, so accurately described by Colin Wheeler ("Vicars, town elders, busybodies", 13 November), has also infected St John's in Egham.

It is an unusual Georgian church containing the history of the town accumulated by generations of Egham churchgoers. The current parochial church council intends to strip out all that is not "original" – including altar, pulpit and pews – and reorder to create a modern worship venue. Some of the items for disposal are gifts, including oak doors commemorating the Queen's coronation.

It fills me with sadness that this generation at St John's will be remembered for destruction; their contribution to the church – carpet tiles. ALICE CHRISTIE  
*Egham, Surrey*

Sir: Colin Wheeler's rant suggests that providing old churches with toilets, kitchens, meeting rooms and creche facilities is vandalism. Am I then to assume that he lives in a medieval house with rushes on the floor, an outside earth closet, no running water, and an open fire for heating?

The Rev EDWARD PROBERT  
*Sutton, Surrey*

### Bank on it

Sir: So "the Bank of England's Inflation Report provides official confirmation... that interest rates might have to rise again" and "a sharp fall in growth next year [is] very likely," but the good news is that "the fall in the number of unemployment claimants... in October was the smallest for a year and a half" ("Bank reports better inflation outlook", 13 November).

If this is the price of Bank of England control of interest rates and 2.5 per cent inflation many of us with big mortgages on small houses and a social conscience may think it high indeed – and dread the prospect of an even more remote European Central Bank with an even more draconian attitude to inflation. God forbid, but Gordon Brown may yet make a Tory of me. MARTIN WILLCOX  
*Sheffield*

### Honest bomber

Sir: Why is Taki being credited with the insight that Guy Fawkes was "the only person ever to have entered Parliament with sincere convictions" (Quote Unquote, 8 November)? I first encountered this idea on a poster some 30 years ago, although then it was Fawkes's "honest intentions" which were being lauded. The poster was usually displayed alongside another which said, "Whoever you voted for, the Government got in". The truth of this seems increasingly clear day by day. WILLIAM SCOTT  
*Seminant, Wiltshire*

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The best propaganda can be a single word. Who was it who thought up "surfing" the Internet? This enticing simile has probably wasted more human hours than were expended on the Pyramids and the Great Wall of China and, of course, to lesser effect.

With the suggestion of exhilarating power, control and speed, the word surfing has lured hundreds of thousands of impressionable folk into an endlessly unsatisfying and torpid virtual purgatory, where nothing happens fast and nothing is what you hoped for.

Surfing is precisely what doesn't happen to you (all right, me) on the Net. What happens is that you clamber in ungainly fashion on to your keyboard, wobble optimistically and promptly fall off again into a blurred cold wash of cyberscuff, surrounded by bobbing advertising wrappers and wasted, swallowed hours. Surfing? Pah.

As a colleague put it to me this week, the Net is like the ultimate disappointing Christmas present: layers and layers of gaudily presented and enticing wrapping paper in which nestles, at the end, a pair of socks. I feel just the same about the *GO*-type magazines. They look so bright, so enticing... and yet, in the end, there's almost nothing there. All crunch. No bite.

All of which was sparked off by two events: joining the Net at home, and a piece by Miles Kington yesterday, which began with the thought that the words "Princess Diana" will keep people reading. The Net is, as we reported earlier, basically kept alive by people tapping in "sex" and "porn", as well as "Diana" and a relatively small number of other hot-button words. For there are others. Alan Coren produced a book with a swastika on the front called "Golfing for Cats" on the basis that someone had told

him the only things that sold were Nazis, cats and golf.

For newspapers, all this remains true. Those brightly coloured bits that go around the masthead of most papers (though not currently us) are basically very simple come-ons. They say: sex, booze, films, cheap sex, violence... and so on. We do something not dissimilar in our little panel below the masthead. The evidence is that these little come-ons work, sending subliminal messages even to people who think they only buy a newspaper to discover the latest stage of negotiations between the Austrian finance ministry and the Armenian Refugee Alliance.

But at least with a broadsheet you only have to turn a page to discover whether there is substance as well as packaging, and you don't have to wait to connect. That's one advantage. Another was well put by one of the founders of this paper, who once pointed out that if we only used computers and someone came along offering to cram the important information and controversy into an easily portable, readable and foldable form (eg, a newspaper) they would be hailed as a brilliant technological innovator.

Enough smug editor – ed. Some hideous journalistic mistakes are repeated seasonally, and seem worse each time. You don't want or need to know about the picture library calling up the image, which wasn't seen on screen, and accordingly checked, and all those other plausible excuses... but yes, the old Nye Bevan/Ernest Bevin howler appeared on page 11 of yesterday's Eye. Both Labour heroes were great men but they were, I can confirm, different great men, and remain so, however many youthful sub-editors on national newspapers try tidily to conflate them. Sorry.

Andrew Marr

## QUOTE UNQUOTE

What we did was indefensible in moral terms – Sir Christopher Bell, Oxford University's former chief funding negotiator, on how O-bridge outwitted civil servants to obtain extra money

Does it [Judge Zobel's ruling] say that you can kill a baby and that your youth and inexperience with cranky babies counts for more than a child's life? – Deborah Eappen

"Tell me, have you ever done any television?" – The Queen's reported remark to Terry Wogan at Broadcasting House

Brazil have had Biggs for 27 years. They can keep him as far as I'm concerned – Malcolm Fewtrell, former head of Buckinghamshire CID

Have we slain one dragon only to have another take its place, with a red rose in its mouth? – Martin Bell, to Tony Blair

If men and women are equal intellectually they should be treated equally. Betty Boothroyd, Commons Speaker, on why she opposes positive discrimination in the Labour Party

I smoked 25 cannabis joints every day – George Michael on his response to the death of a close male friend



# 21/COMMENT

## She promised him a rose garden — then she changed her mind



DAVID  
AARONOVITCH  
A CAUTIONARY TALE

The pictures tell the tale. At the top the large photograph is of a bosky dell — an acre or so of pretty trees and rose bushes. Forget-me-nots and poppies sprinkle the flower beds, and the sun filters through the leaves and catches the daisies on the lawn. This is the inheritance; the cottage gardens in Crowthorne, Berkshire, of Mrs Gertrude Parker who died in 1995. And very nice they are.

Below this vision of limited Paradise, are the pictures of the *dramatis personae* in the court case that ended this week. In the middle the last, blurry image of Mrs Parker herself, in her mid-eighties, her face gaunt and her mouth open in that tremulous "who are you?" expression of extreme old age. On her left is a man of 60 or so — the first contender for Gertrude's worldly goods and gardens. Looking pained, Mr Bob Taylor — Mrs Parker's faithful gardener for many years — has just lost his two-year case claiming that Mrs Parker's true intention had been that he should inherit the bungalow and grounds.

On Gertrude's right is a very different face. A happy Hyacinth smiles out plumply at us, a woman in secure possession of that which is rightly hers. It is Mrs Margaret Bosher (ominously Dickensian name for a windfall inheritor), who also helped Mrs Parker in her last years, and to whom all was left.

The story is not complicated. Every day, for seven years Mr Taylor worked, free of charge, in the garden, reminding himself (as he had twice been told) that one day, all this would be his. As Mrs Parker declined, his distress must have been somewhat alleviated by the knowledge of the gratitude she felt towards him, and the manner in which that gratitude was to be shown.

The years went by. Mrs Parker, for long bedridden, eventually died, and Mr Taylor prepared to come into his inheritance. Only then did he discover the terrible truth: Mrs Bosher had got the lot. At some point in the past

couple of years, unbeknownst to him, old Gertrude had changed her will. Mr Taylor argued in court that he had an implied contract with the dead woman, spent £50,000 of his own savings on the case, and lost it. On Wednesday, the day of his defeat, a jubilant (if tactless) Mrs Bosher commented that she was "delighted that Mrs Parker had got her wishes. Norman [Mr Bosher] and I are both keen gardeners and we are looking forward to having a much bigger garden."

Now, let's wind back two years and picture the scene in Mrs Parker's last few days on earth. She is slipping. And she is surrounded by men and women who stand to benefit (or think they do) from her death. What does she imagine their emotions to be, if she imagines anything at all? Regret? Anxiety? Impatience? Or has she all along made the calculation that the only way a lonely widow without family can be sure of care and attention is if she allows it to be believed that kindness need not be its own reward?

If so, then there is some sort of contract there (though not one enforceable by law), which makes the expectations of the potential inheritors less, shall we say, ignoble. Though it has to be said that if Mrs Bosher was aware of (a) Mrs Taylor's belief in what was coming his way, and (b) the true state of Mrs Parker's intentions, then her demeanour in the last, long days of Gertrude's life would have made a study in suppressed emotions.

It's all hopeless, of course, and no less so within families. The trouble with the word inheritance, is that it implies a natural order of things: you inherit your parents' characteristics, their genes. It is therefore somehow your "right" that you should inherit their wealth, or a portion of it. Actually it is no such thing. Rather, it is repugnant and pernicious (two words that I have not used since I stopped writing editorials). Repugnant because it cannot be healthy for a son or daughter to have a vested interest in the death of a parent. Especially in these days when extended life expectancy can mean the rapid disappearance of a patrimony into nursing charges (or round-the-world cruises). Pernicious because, insofar as you do inherit anything, it is not anything that you yourself have deserved or striven for. How extraordinary it seems to me, that people who can talk about the dependency culture on the one hand, can also advocate reducing inheritance tax on the other.

Ah, but I am looking at it too much from the point of view of the inheritor, am I not? What about the entirely natural wish of the leaver to pass something on? Well, let us anatomise this feeling. Part of it is, I think, a kind of post-mortem swank, a keeping up with the dead Joneses. Celestially one will point at the Jaguar in one's son's driveway. Yet another part is an improper desire to engineer a future in which one will not take part. This is particularly evident in those conditions that some add to their wills. It can never work.

So would we really lose anything (and might we not gain much) were we to, say, impose 100 per cent tax on all inheritance beyond one sofa and the family photos? Had this been the law two years ago, Mr Taylor would be a much happier man today.

## Black angels? It's a hope in heaven



TREVOR  
PHILLIPS  
ON CELESTIAL  
PREJUDICE

Maybe Heaven is a happy haven of multiculturalism where angels of all colours join hands to sing Her praise; maybe the celestial hosts can move effortlessly medieval plainsong, to baroque anthems into a wild jazz-funk groove. There will, of course be a place for gospel, and I know that there's a special seat in the choir reserved for the Queen of Soul, Aretha, when she decides to move on from this earthly gig.

However, if you paused to take a look at the bundles of junk mail tumbling through your letterbox, amongst the offers of Christmas cards, of special gifts and of charitable emblems, you'll notice one glaring omission. Whatever colours the people come in, the angels all seem to come from Scandinavia — blonde, blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked cherubs, and resolutely Teutonic seraphim.

Why can't an angel be black? It's not a trivial question. The most important festival in the year for most British families of all kinds is meant to be an "inclusive" celebration. It is above all, a festival for children. So how can we exclude some children from that joyous moment? It's a question raised charmingly, but sharply, by the children's author Mary Hoffman in her new book, *An Angel Just Like Me*. Her first book, *Amazing Grace*, a story about a little girl (who it happens, is black), has sold more than a million and a half copies since 1991.

*An Angel Just Like Me* concerns a child who wants an angel that looks like him. The fact that he can't find one reflects reality. The book's publisher, Frances Lincoln, rang all the major retailers; she discovered that not a single one stocked a black angel, or cards showing a black angel. To their credit, the top people's store Harrods has pledged itself to do so

next year. Sainsbury's Home Base and Littlewoods may follow suit if encouraged by demand, so you now know what to do when you're buying your decorations. But most other large suppliers have simply ignored the issue.

It may be hard for white people to grasp the awfulness of this. Most people think that the worst effects of prejudice are associated with gross racial attacks and overt job discrimination. Appalling as these are, it is the millions of everyday humiliations and slights that leave the deepest wounds on the psyche.

Take a teenager looking for make-up. There are specialist suppliers for African or Asian complexions. But if you do not live in an area where these relatively small shops supply a large number of black clients, the make-up counter doesn't have the first idea what to do with

you. So unless all black or Asian people choose to live in ghettos, the sort of everyday item everyone else takes for granted becomes a major shopping expedition; and if you don't live in the ghetto, you can look forward to being reminded every day that you aren't quite the same as everyone else.

Don't get me wrong. This is not an appeal for enforced quotas in department stores (though they could do themselves some commercial good with a more sensitive purchasing policy). I'm not proposing that the Commission for Racial Equality should investigate Heaven: I'm sure that the Almighty has an equal opportunities policy second to none. However, it does seem a bit puzzling that, though we can now get hold of black Santas, black Jesus, Marys and Josephs, we can only find white angels. It should really be the other

way around. We know that St Nick was definitely a Northern European of some kind: you don't see too many reindeer in the tropics. We've recently heard that Joseph may not have been a carpenter after all, but a rather posh furniture salesman; however, there's no doubt where he came from — the Middle East.

Even in the Caribbean, they still put up holly, mistletoe and Christmas trees around the Noel. It makes sense: most of the Christmas icons have their origins in some real person, animal or plant.

That's what makes the angel so unique. Unless *Independent* readers can offer some stupendous revelation, I know of no one who can claim to have seen an angel. Yes, I know that the Mormons reckon that some of their elders show up from time to time, and some of the Nation of Islam

Delroy Lindo in 'A Life Less Ordinary': the only black angel we could find at short notice



claim that their founder had a tutorial from a mysterious black messenger; but these are not real angels, they're just dead people. I'm talking about your average, common or garden harp-strummer, lying about on a cloud, with eternal bliss being interrupted only occasionally for a swig of nectar.

No one knows what these beings are really like, because even if they show up on earth, usually in Hollywood, they always look like people — usually Audrey Hepburn, John Travolta, Warren Beatty, or occasionally Denzel Washington (well, wouldn't you if you had the choice?). But for the most part, when we see angels in their natural state, they always look the same: white, dressed in white. The angel represents something special in most cultures. Principally he or she appears as a messenger from the Almighty — but there's something deeper here.

The angel is in some way related to humankind, with our shape and our appetites. But angels lack our faults and our weaknesses; no spots, blemishes, physical imperfections, not even the problems associated with gender. In practice, therefore, the representation of the angel should simply be the person each of us would like to be in our dreams. So do the manufacturers of Christmas cards and decorations truly believe that we'd all really like to look like Rutger Hauer? You must be joking.

I think that they, like many others, haven't yet woken up to the reality of a world in which most Christians are not Europeans — they are African, South American, and Asian. Even here in the UK, the fastest-growing churches are those of the evangelical movement which take their tone, style and much of their membership from the black communities. What is still nominally a Christian festival might just take account of that fact. I wonder, by the way, why we haven't heard anything on this matter from the Established Church? Or do they need a blast from Gabriel's horn (he's been taking lessons from Louis Armstrong, I hope) to wake them up?

## Life's a gamble, it's true. But the real risks are not the ones you fear



RICHARD D  
NORTH  
ON THE RISK  
SOCIETY

Do you lose sleep about them? Is your experience of our fag-end of the century one of nervousness at the new dangers which surround us? According to *The Politics of Risk Society*, published this week, if you are a real modern you will be well aware that there is something new and important about the hazards of life.

The new idea of danger is to the modern age what sex was to the last *fin de siècle*: a familiar enough subject re-invented as a special worry. This time, however, the concern is concern itself. The authors, corralled by the left-of-centre think-tank IPPR, are not on a mission of old-fashioned alarmism. They say that the new riskiness may be redeemed by a new and fascinating response.

The phrase "risk society" was invented by a sociologist, Ulrich Beck, who is based in Munich and Cardiff. He asserts that the BSE scare, for example, demonstrates that "society has become a laboratory where there is absolutely no one in charge. An experiment has

been inflicted on us by the beef industries." For beef, you might as well read "nuclear", "chemical", and "bio-engineering". You will easily get the flavour of the adventure: "We no longer choose to take risks, we have them thrust upon us." Conventional politics and bureaucracies are failing us: they are, Beck says, quoting Hannah Arendt, "forms of organised irresponsibility". They alternate between denial and cover-up.

Another contributor, Anthony Giddens (director of the LSE), writes in a vein less Continental and more continental. Giddens stresses that the new risks are not natural, but essentially manufactured. Thus, they force us to rethink industrial society. He notes that modern societies aren't more risky than previous ones, and may even be less so. It is just as well he says this, since we now expect to live relatively painlessly for a very long time, and indeed our longevity is arguably the greatest threat to our equanimity.

Giddens argues what is surely true: nowadays we are thinking more about risk. At least, we are invited to. We are in receipt of a mountain of surveys and studies which try to pin causes to effects. Butter, wine, nuclear power, sexual promiscuity, car-driving and BSE are discussed for their relation to heart disease, leukaemia, Aids, global warming and CJD. Blame is chased everywhere, and is found to be elusive, even by those personal-injury lawyers who hope to find it in the well-lined pockets of culpable capitalists and their insurers.

In the new view, the most important new feature of risks is the nature of their uncertainty.



They are not uncertain as cuddly old earthquakes or volcanoes are, say, as to timing. They are often uncertain as to their very existence and likelihood. Some are wholly unexpected. We have, of course, plenty to worry about: we might release a super-bug which might flourish in the globally-warmed fields of a Sussex countryside rendered uninhabitable by an explosion in a French nuclear power station. More prosaically, we are in daily contact with hundreds of thousands of manmade substances all of whose effects we cannot know.

But do these risks offer large scope for the organisers of concern? Not really. As against the IPPR account of risks, I prefer the painstaking accounts of hazards offered in a collection published under the banner of the European Science and Environment Forum, by Roger Bate, the director of the environment unit of the

right-of-centre think-tank the IEA. His *What Risks?* doesn't underestimate the difficulties science has in tracking down the hazard posed by industrial technologies when things go wrong, or by their inadvertencies. But it points to many successes in demystification, and these accounts of scientific detective work leave one with the impression that governments are far more likely to over-react, and to be over-cautious in their regulation, than the washed-up, secretive, pseudo-democrats of the IPPR's imaginings.

The *Politics of Risk Society* thinking uses the authors' anxiety about our anxieties to propose and celebrate the emergence of post-political non-systems for the perception and mediation of hazards. These are epitomised by Susie Orbach, who thinks some new self-confidence is needed in people who now face uncertainties at work and "the collapse of the

health and education services". Perhaps she hasn't noticed that people get livings, education and doctoring more easily than ever in history.

The modern situation is the opposite of hood-winked innocents being duped by scientists and manipulated by politicians. We all know just enough to expect scientists to explain their thinking to us. We are just autonomous enough to demand that politicians give us something other than reassurance.

Robin Grove-White, one of the most thoughtful of the new worry-professionals, noting that this is true, says society is engaged in "locating and relocating trust and mistrust". One just hopes we look in the right places. Professor Giddens, at least, appears to: he stresses the continuing need for formal democratic processes. He perhaps senses that the location of good government remains the leather benches of Parliament

rather than the post-modern couches of therapists.

The IPPR crew are right to see that we need to develop new ways of understanding public concerns, prioritising them, and informing the political process of them. But we needn't go to the other extreme of imagining our old, formal processes, or old ideas of rational investigation, don't deserve our trust any more. The fact is, the modern age has shown us that we have big consumer demands and satisfying them requires tricky technologies whose risks are not always clear in advance. Population growth imbues the process with moral purpose. Naturally, there is unease. But we mostly face these new hazards with surprising equanimity, and as the unsurprising price of affluence. Indeed, there is, after an unprecedented period of stability, peace and prosperity, rather more *ennui* than anxiety about.

Our expectation of safety has simultaneously made us rather petulant when things go wrong, whilst seeking adventure holidays as a relief from the way things mostly go right.

So we need to be sceptical of the wilder claims of a new generation of lawyers, therapists, academics, campaigners and good old puritans who affect to worry about out worrying: after all, it provides them good material for lawsuits, counselling, studies, fundraising and breast-beating.

*The Politics of Risk Society* published by Policy Press, in association with IPPR, £12.95 paperback, £39.50 hardback. *What Risks?* published by Butterworth-Heinemann, £30 hardback.

### BURBLE!

### SQUAWK!

### CHATTER!

This year give yourself a peaceful Christmas. Give the children in your life a gift of membership to the YOC — the junior section of the RSPB. We'll teach them all about birds, wildlife and the environment and how to protect it. There's lots for them to do with outings, competitions, FREE entry to over 100 nature reserves, six issues of *Bird Life* magazine and a snazzy membership pack all included in their year's membership! If that sounds like a great idea, simply complete and return the coupon below.

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I would like to make a gift of YOC membership to:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
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(Please list additional names on a separate sheet of paper.)

One year's membership ☐ £8 for one child ☐ £11 for all children in the family *Special joining offer a pack of 40 colour bird fact cards*

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I enclose a cheque/PO (payable to YOC) or debit my Access/Visa Card No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 for the amount of £ \_\_\_\_\_ Card expiry date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cardholder's signature \_\_\_\_\_  
 My name Mr/Mrs/Ms \_\_\_\_\_  
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Please send the Welcome Pack to me ☐ to the new members) ☐ Send to: YOC, RSPB, FREEPOST, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2BR. Registered charity no 207076.

The charity that takes action for wild birds and the environment

**RSPB**







# Lonrho loses its glister as the price of gold dives

## MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

The slump in the price of gold is having a devastating impact on the shares of Lonrho, the international trading group once dominated by Tiny Rowland. With the bullion around a 12-year low, the shares fell a further 4p to 86p, worst level for four years.

As the gold price has collapsed and the pound strengthened, Lonrho has found itself under intense pressure. The classic plunger movement has occurred at a time the group is out of favour with a stock market acutely baffled by its reshaping and involvement with South Africa's unquoted Tavistock Collieries.

Profits in the year to September last year more than halved to £78m. They were sharply down at the interim stage and there are worries about the outcome for the year ended last September.

Lonrho's deeper South African involvement is already a protracted affair. If the deal is completed it will create the republic's largest coal mining operation and give JCI, the South African group, 29.9 per cent of Lonrho, largely through a deal with Anglo American.

Due diligence has been completed. According to JCI "complex finalisation arrangements" are still outstanding. This could indicate haggling over the price, with Lonrho seeking to renegotiate the £210m indicated in early September.

Although Lonrho has put through a number of deals in its bid to become a pure mining group it has still to complete several, including the sale of its high-profile Princess Hotels chain.

The deteriorating outlook

for metals has also hit other producers such as RioTinto and Biliton.

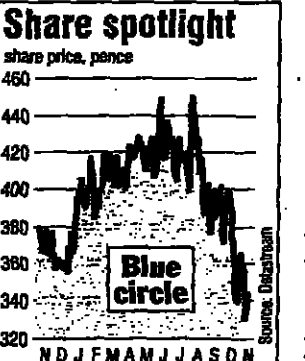
At one time Footsie was up 903 points. But its advance lacked conviction. Even before New York lost a modest early gain the index was in retreat and by the close had to be content with a 30.8 gain to 4,741.8. The FTSE 250 index made headway but the FTSE Small-Cap index was pulled down as some dealers backed at its constituents.

Rolls-Royce, up 19p at 236.5p, was the best performing blue chip as the aero engine orders continued to fly in. Delta, the US airline, has selected Rolls Trent engines in a deal worth \$260m with a potential value of more than \$1.5bn.

Blue Circle Industries gained 13p to 343p on a rumoured Cazenove push and a

boardroom shake-up at Caradon, the building materials group, lifted the shares 14.5p to 182p. It purchased 2 million shares at 179.5p.

Norwich Union, at one time up 16.75p on another takeover buzz, ended 1p higher at 364.5p as it seemed, many small shareholders rushed to take advantage of the rumour. The London &



Manchester insurance group attracted some speculative attention, up 19p at 476.5p.

Allied Domecq, on restructuring hopes, climbed 21p to 522p, and Bass was 19.5p higher at 861.5p. Goldman Sachs suggest the shares are "significantly undervalued".

The US securities house says: "Investors looking for bays of value have a lot to go for. Our analysis suggests that Bass' balance sheet is significantly under-representative of true asset value. We estimate up to £700m of property value does not appear on the balance sheet."

Cash-rich Associated British Foods rose 22.5p to 540p on vague talk it may have identified a takeover target. Northern Foods, expected to produce interim profits of £69m against £57.8m next week, put on a further 4p to

261.5p following buy advice from a number of quarters.

J Sainsbury, taking 21 analysts to the US to see its struggling Shaw's supermarket chain, rose 9.25p to 495p.

FirstBus, likely to capture Bristol Airport, advanced 9.5p to 235.5p with Stagecoach moving ahead 42p to 813.5p in support.

Newcomer BCH, a vehicle management business, motivated to 202.5p from a 190p placing.

Hatfield fell 15p to 52.5p. The recruitment services group gave a profit warning because of what it called "an unusually low level" of moves by advertising personnel.

The Anglesey Mining run came to a halt, with the shares off 3.25p to 13.25p. On Crediton Minerals, on the prospect of Devon gold, rose a further 3p to 26p.

## TAKING STOCK

Advanced Power Components, which achieved the distinction of producing a profits warning just three months after arriving on the market, held at 59.5p. The shares were floated at 70p. A profit of £1.5m had been expected but stockbroker Henry Cooke Lumsden believes the company will have to settle for around £900,000 when it reports next month. For the current year Henry Cooke is looking for £1.5m. APC makes components for the integrated services digital network and should benefit from BT's plans to make a high-speed Internet service available to every home through an ISDN upgrade.

Talk of corporate excitement at Tullow Oil is going the rounds again. The shares jumped 10p to 136p, a new closing high. BC is one name in the frame.

12 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	P/E Code
Alcoholic Beverages							
401 401	401.00	399.00	Alfred Dunhill	52.00	-0.00	4.7	53.00
402 402	402.00	400.00	Budweiser	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
403 403	403.00	401.00	Carlsberg	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
404 404	404.00	402.00	Guinness	50.00	-0.00	1.1	50.00
405 405	405.00	403.00	Heineken	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
406 406	406.00	404.00	Miller	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
407 407	407.00	405.00	Stout	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
408 408	408.00	406.00	Watney	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
409 409	409.00	407.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
410 410	410.00	408.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
411 411	411.00	409.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
412 412	412.00	410.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
413 413	413.00	411.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
414 414	414.00	412.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
415 415	415.00	413.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
416 416	416.00	414.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
417 417	417.00	415.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
418 418	418.00	416.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
419 419	419.00	417.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
420 420	420.00	418.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
421 421	421.00	419.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
422 422	422.00	420.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
423 423	423.00	421.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
424 424	424.00	422.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
425 425	425.00	423.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
426 426	426.00	424.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
427 427	427.00	425.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
428 428	428.00	426.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
429 429	429.00	427.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
430 430	430.00	428.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
431 431	431.00	429.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
432 432	432.00	430.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
433 433	433.00	431.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
434 434	434.00	432.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
435 435	435.00	433.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
436 436	436.00	434.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
437 437	437.00	435.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
438 438	438.00	436.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
439 439	439.00	437.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
440 440	440.00	438.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
441 441	441.00	439.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
442 442	442.00	440.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
443 443	443.00	441.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
444 444	444.00	442.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
445 445	445.00	443.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
446 446	446.00	444.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
447 447	447.00	445.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
448 448	448.00	446.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
449 449	449.00	447.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
450 450	450.00	448.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
451 451	451.00	449.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
452 452	452.00	450.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
453 453	453.00	451.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
454 454	454.00	452.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
455 455	455.00	453.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
456 456	456.00	454.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
457 457	457.00	455.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
458 458	458.00	456.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
459 459	459.00	457.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
460 460	460.00	458.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
461 461	461.00	459.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
462 462	462.00	460.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
463 463	463.00	461.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
464 464	464.00	462.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
465 465	465.00	463.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
466 466	466.00	464.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
467 467	467.00	465.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
468 468	468.00	466.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
469 469	469.00	467.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
470 470	470.00	468.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
471 471	471.00	469.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
472 472	472.00	470.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
473 473	473.00	471.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
474 474	474.00	472.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
475 475	475.00	473.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
476 476	476.00	474.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
477 477	477.00	475.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
478 478	478.00	476.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
479 479	479.00	477.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
480 480	480.00	478.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
481 481	481.00	479.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
482 482	482.00	480.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
483 483	483.00	481.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
484 484	484.00	482.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
485 485	485.00	483.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
486 486	486.00	484.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
487 487	487.00	485.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
488 488	488.00	486.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
489 489	489.00	487.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
490 490	490.00	488.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
491 491	491.00	489.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
492 492	492.00	490.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
493 493	493.00	491.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
494 494	494.00	492.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
495 495	495.00	493.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
496 496	496.00	494.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
497 497	497.00	495.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
498 498	498.00	496.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
499 499	499.00	497.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
500 500	500.00	498.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00

	12 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	P/E Code
Alcoholic Beverages	401	401.00	399.00	Alfred Dunhill	52.00	-0.00	4.7	53.00
	402	402.00	400.00	Budweiser	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	403	403.00	401.00	Carlsberg	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	404	404.00	402.00	Guinness	50.00	-0.00	1.1	50.00
	405	405.00	403.00	Heineken	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	406	406.00	404.00	Miller	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	407	407.00	405.00	Stout	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	408	408.00	406.00	Watney	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	409	409.00	407.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	410	410.00	408.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	411	411.00	409.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	412	412.00	410.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	413	413.00	411.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	414	414.00	412.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	415	415.00	413.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
Cigarettes	416	416.00	414.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	417	417.00	415.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	418	418.00	416.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	419	419.00	417.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	420	420.00	418.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	421	421.00	419.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	422	422.00	420.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	423	423.00	421.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	424	424.00	422.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	425	425.00	423.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	426	426.00	424.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	427	427.00	425.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	428	428.00	426.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	429	429.00	427.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	430	430.00	428.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
Food	431	431.00	429.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	432	432.00	430.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	433	433.00	431.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	434	434.00	432.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	435	435.00	433.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	436	436.00	434.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	437	437.00	435.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	438	438.00	436.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	439	439.00	437.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	440	440.00	438.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	441	441.00	439.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	442	442.00	440.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	443	443.00	441.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	444	444.00	442.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	445	445.00	443.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
Soft Drinks	446	446.00	444.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	447	447.00	445.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	448	448.00	446.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	449	449.00	447.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	450	450.00	448.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	451	451.00	449.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	452	452.00	450.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	453	453.00	451.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	454	454.00	452.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	455	455.00	453.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	456	456.00	454.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	457	457.00	455.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	458	458.00	456.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	459	459.00	457.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	460	460.00	458.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
Tobacco	461	461.00	459.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	462	462.00	460.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	463	463.00	461.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	464	464.00	462.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	465	465.00	463.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	466	466.00	464.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	467	467.00	465.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	468	468.00	466.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	469	469.00	467.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	470	470.00	468.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	471	471.00	469.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	472	472.00	470.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	473	473.00	471.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	474	474.00	472.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	475	475.00	473.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
Wine & Spirits	476	476.00	474.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	477	477.00	475.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	478	478.00	476.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	479	479.00	477.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	480	480.00	478.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	481	481.00	479.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	482	482.00	480.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	483	483.00	481.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	484	484.00	482.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	485	485.00	483.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	486	486.00	484.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	487	487.00	485.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	488	488.00	486.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	489	489.00	487.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	490	490.00	488.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
Miscellaneous	491	491.00	489.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	492	492.00	490.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	493	493.00	491.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	494	494.00	492.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	495	495.00	493.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	496	496.00	494.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	497	497.00	495.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	498	498.00	496.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	499	499.00	497.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	500	500.00	498.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	501	501.00	499.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	502	502.00	500.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	503	503.00	501.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	504	504.00	502.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00
	505	505.00	503.00	Windsor	45.00	-0.00	1.1	45.00



## Chairman attacks Liberty family on 'back door' tactics

The board of Liberty, the troubled retailer, yesterday attacked the company's founding family, saying its attempt to oust the group's chairman would destabilise the business and place the remaining directors in an untenable position. Denis Cassidy, chairman, said that instead of attempting a 'back door takeover', the family should make a formal bid or back off. Nigel Cope, City Correspondent, reports on a bitter battle.

Launching an offensive against the Stewart-Liberty family and the rebel shareholder, Bryan Myerson, Mr Cassidy said their behaviour was wholly inappropriate for a public company. "It's shareholders behaving badly," he said. "If they want to run it as a family business then they should make an offer to all shareholders. But what we have is a couple of shareholders behaving as if this is a private company of which they are proprietors."

He accused the family and Mr Myerson of forming an "unlikely and short term alliance" to gain control of the business without paying a premium. Mr Cassidy said that if the family successfully ousted him as chairman and replaced him with Mr Myerson and Odile Griffith, the family's financial representative, then the rest of the board would be placed in an untenable position. "Presumably they too may also be threatened with removal," Mr Cassidy said. In a circular sent to shareholders yesterday, the board said the family's plans would threaten the strategy of the company at a crucial time. It said Liberty's entire set of advisers would resign if Mr Cassidy was ousted. In addition to Cazenove, these include Barings, its financial advisers, and Slaughter and May, its lawyers.

It also said that Barclays would reconsider its position regarding the £40m redevelopment of the flagship Regent Street store if the family's plans to remove Mr Cassidy were successful.

The family rejected the board's accusations as "nonsense". Ms Griffith said it would make no difference if all the group's advisers resigned as replacements could easily be found. She also said that the family were quite happy to work with the remainder of the board and that the family had written to them to that effect. "We are not intending to appoint a lot of palsies to the board that will take instructions from us," Ms Griffith said.

She said the family had decided to remove Mr Cassidy because they did not support his plans to spend £43m on redeveloping the Regent Street store. "We accept that the store needs improvement with air conditioning and escalators but we do not believe that £43m is appropriate."

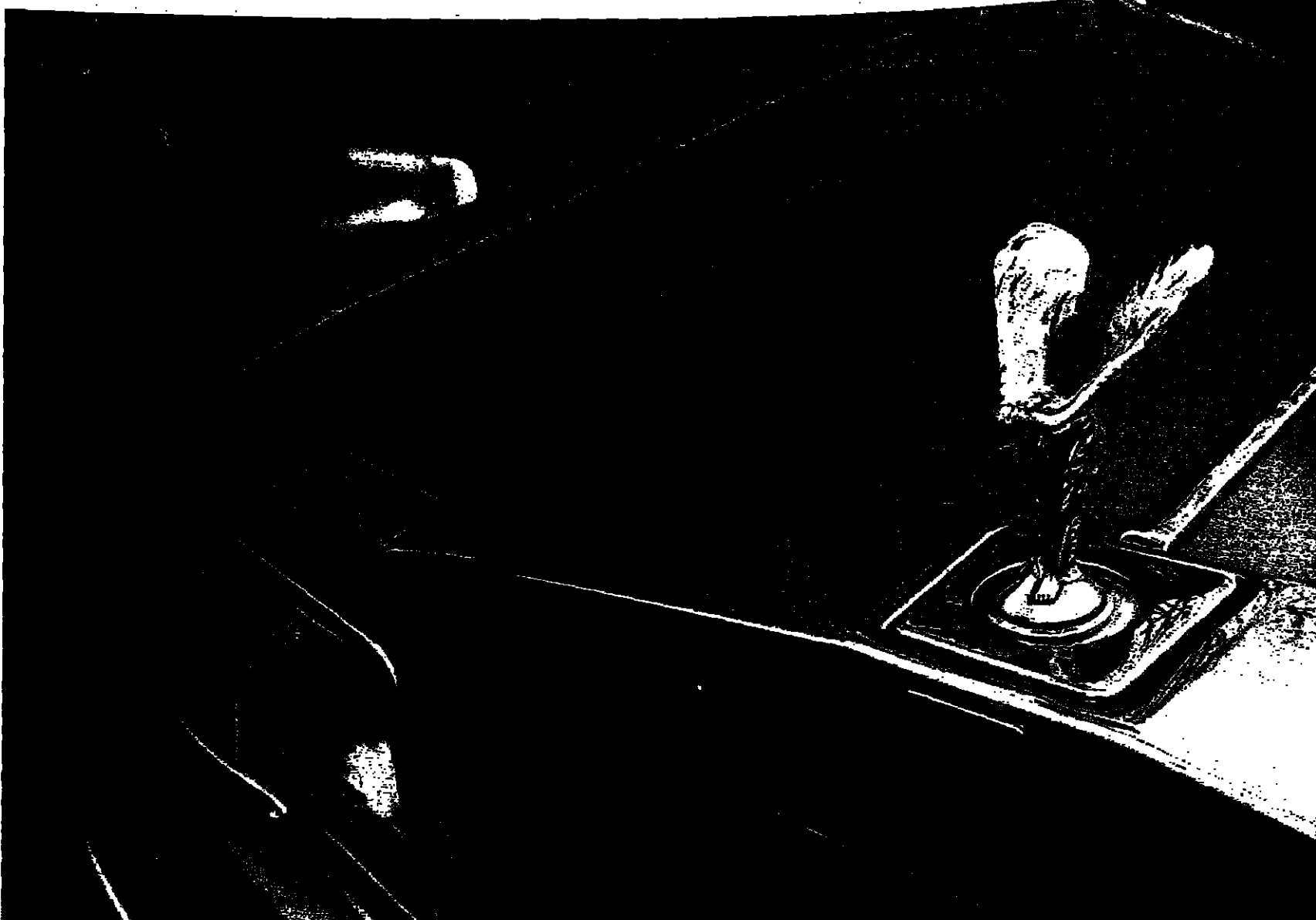
The board will now try to win enough support to defeat the resolution to remove Mr Cassidy at the emergency meeting, which has been set for 11 December. This will be difficult as the family and Mr Myerson control 44 per cent of the shares between them.

The board will start talking to institutional investors immediately. They control 23 per cent of the shares while the extended Stewart-Liberty family controls an additional 27 per cent. The family is also set to lobby for additional support and will send out its response to the board's circular shortly.

Mr Cassidy was in reflective mood yesterday on his decision to join Liberty in the first place. "I turned the job down on a number of occasions before accepting it. I do not regret coming in because it is a lovely business with a good team. It just needs a little push. But if I'm herded off then I will regret having wasted two and a half years of my life."

He also warned that if he was ousted "it would be a savage blow to small businesses which seek to recruit professional managers".

The Liberty board, which put the 120-year-old business up for sale earlier this month, said it had received several expressions of interest both from UK and overseas groups. The company is currently valued at £85m at yesterday's share price of 375p, down 20p yesterday.



Moves to merge marques: VW's intervention turns the battle for ownership of Rolls into an auction between as many as seven big foreign car groups

## Volkswagen joins bidders for Rolls-Royce cars

The prospects of the Rolls-Royce luxury car maker remaining in British hands all but disappeared yesterday after Volkswagen of Germany threw its hat in the ring. VW's intervention turns the battle for ownership of Rolls into an auction between as many as seven big foreign car groups, all of them foreign.

Reports from Germany yesterday suggested that VW had already made a bid and had all but won the contest. But a spokesman for parent company Vickers, which put Rolls up for sale three weeks ago, dismissed this as "nonsense".

BMW of Germany has already confirmed that it is interested in buying Rolls and, de-

spite a denial yesterday, Daimler-Benz is also thought to be contemplating a bid.

All three main US car groups - General Motors, Ford and Chrysler - are believed to be eyeing Rolls although, again, GM yesterday denied it was interested. The other possible bidder is Fiat of Italy, which owns Ferrari and Alfa Romeo.

Industry observers said they doubted whether any British bid would now emerge following the collapse of the planned £1bn hostile bid for Vickers by the car components and engineering group Mayflower.

It was pointed out that only large car companies with deep pockets and specialist

knowledge of the business were likely to bid. Since BMW bought Rover three years ago, Britain no longer has a UK-owned volume car maker.

Analysts estimates of Rolls' value range from £250m to £600m. It is reckoned to make profits of about £21m a year. But any buyer would probably have to invest a further £500m to renew the model range.

German press reports said that VW had made an informal offer that was likely to be accepted. But a Vickers spokesman said: "The deal is not done, that is wrong. The timetable goes well into next year and the deal may not be done until the spring."

He also pointed out that Lazards, Vickers financial advisers, had not yet sent out the Memorandum of Sale to interested parties and was still in the process of registering expressions of interest.

Another observer said: "There is a peculiar German dynamic to all this. BMW, VW and Daimler delight in tweaking each other's tails. In particular, VW likes the idea of taking the battle on to BMW's forecourts." BMW has been approached by a dozen wealthy Rolls owners asking to be included in any bid it decides to make.

- Michael Harrison

## Tax policy on directors' pensions challenged

The Inland Revenue is facing a legal challenge over a new practice of imposing a 40 per cent tax charge on lump sum pension payments made to directors who retire early but continue to work for the company. Separately, pension actuaries warned interest rates under EMU would be driven up unless Europe's trillion-pound pension liabilities were addressed. Andrew Verity reports.

The pensions industry is preparing to seek a judicial review over the Inland Revenue's practice of taxing lump-sums previously thought to be tax-

free. The practice, which the industry believes is part of the Government's "spend-to-save" clampdown on tax loopholes, has led to many directors of small companies paying unexpected six-figure sums in tax.

The Revenue's Pension Schemes Office is targeting directors who retire and draw pension benefits, but stay on the board in a reduced role - usually as a non-executive director or as a consultant.

The Revenue claims this breaks rules that bar people from working once they have drawn their pension benefits from company schemes. It is applying the practice even to unpaid, non-executive directors.

The Association of Pensioner Trustees, which represents trustees of small company pension schemes, is preparing to mount a legal challenge over

what it claims is an un-announced change of practice.

Further, the Revenue has told the APT that the practice is universal and could apply to any member of an occupational pension scheme who retires early but then resumes working for the same employer. Potentially, any employee who, after drawing a tax-free lump sum, stays on the pay-roll could be hit with a retrospective tax charge.

The APT says that while the Inland Revenue claims the practice is universal, it is also targeting directors of small companies, many of whom stay on the board purely to hand over the reins to successors.

In one example, a director of a packaging business, who asked not to be named, retired in 1992 with a lump sum payment of more than £400,000. He had remained on the board while the company was being

wound-down. Adrian Waddingham, of actuaries Barnett Waddingham, said: "I have complained to the Revenue that the only cases that have been brought to my attention are controlling directors. But the Revenue has told me this does apply to larger companies. There are countless examples of directors retiring early but working for them later."

While the Revenue insists it has not changed its practice, the rules are by no means universally applied. Gillian Shepherd, the former education minister, said when still in government that she "had no objection" to teachers retiring early and then resuming work for their education authority. Lump sums have remained tax-free.

In a separate development, the Association of Consulting Actuaries warned that interest rates would rise under EMU if governments did not address the issue of unfunded pension liabilities.

The issue caused a great deal of controversy following a report from the House of Commons select committee, led by then-backbencher Frank Field.

Mr Field, now minister for welfare reform at the DSS, said before the election that he believed it made no economic sense for Britain or any other country to join a single currency.

Paul Thornton, chairman of the association, warns that EMU convergence criteria fail to account for the liabilities, which across Europe amount to more than £1,000bn. While Britain has more than £750bn in funded pensions, Italy, France, Germany and Spain have giant future liabilities because of generous benefits paid for from taxes.

## RJB secures jobs with Eastern deal

RJB Mining, the embattled owner of the English coalfields, yesterday secured a deal to preserve colliery jobs after Eastern agreed to buy at least 12 million tonnes of coal over the next three years.

Eastern, Britain's fourth biggest electricity generator with a 10 per cent market share, has agreed to buy 4 million tonnes a year for three years from next April with an option to continue the agreement for a further two years.

However, the deal only covers about half Eastern's coal requirements and represents less coal than it is currently being supplied with by RJB.

There are fears that as many as seven of the company's pits may have to close next year if it fails to secure enough long-term contracts with the three big fossil fuel generators.

Under its existing contracts RJB supplies 30 million tonnes a year to Eastern, National Power and PowerGen and still needs to tie down deals covering 85 per cent of its output for electricity generation.

Eastern and RJB declined to comment on the price they had agreed but one report suggested the deal was worth £600m over five years. Charles Kernot, the Paribas analyst, said: "It's a jolly good price ... not a bad deal, really."

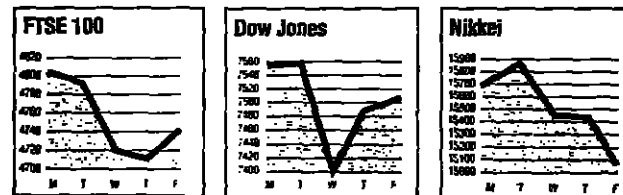
He added that the deal equated to around 125 pence a gigajoule, though this is likely to be a delivered price as opposed to a pithead price.

Delivery, he estimated, would reduce this by around 5 pence a gigajoule. Existing contracts inherited from government-owned British Coal are thought to be worth 150p a gigajoule, while the world market price is 100p-105p.

Eastern is part of the Energy Group, subject of an agreed bid by the US utility, PacificCorp. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the takeover is due to be delivered to the President of the Board of Trade Margaret Beckett next Friday.

- Michael Harrison

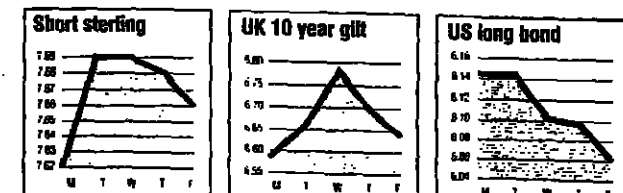
## STOCK MARKETS



Indices

Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	4741.80	-30.80	-0.65	5367.30	3882.70	3.88
FTSE 250	4586.50	-23.20	-0.51	4963.80	4321.80	3.53
FTSE 350	2296.90	-14.30	-0.63	2570.50	1835.70	3.65
FTSE All Share	2251.34	-12.91	-0.58	2507.68	1935.55	3.62
FTSE SmallCap	2286.6	-2.00	-0.09	2407.40	2127.50	3.26
FTSE RealEstate	1252.3	0.50	0.04	1346.50	1188.70	3.40
FTSE AIM	985.7	-0.60	-0.06	1136.00	965.90	1.05
Dow Jones	7509.12	-18.42	-0.25	8296.03	6236.05	1.79
Nikkei	15082.52	-344.75	-2.24	21460.57	15063.22	1.02
Hang Seng	9567.33	-236.55	-2.43	16820.21	8775.88	4.02
Dax	3730.94	-26.65	-0.72	4456.86	2756.11	2.14

## INTEREST RATES



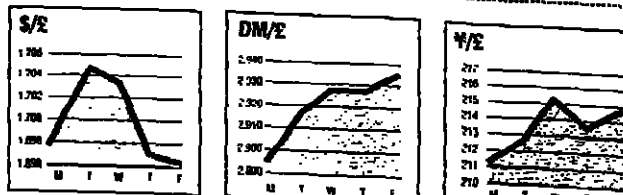
Money Market Rates

Index	3 months	1 yr	1 yr cty	10 year	1 yr cty	Long bond	1 yr cty
UK	7.71	1.27	7.94	0.93	6.63	-0.94	-1.25
US	5.88	0.38	6.00	0.29	5.83	-0.32	-0.36
Japan	0.42	-0.08	0.48	-0.17	1.85	-0.91	2.44
Germany	3.76	0.58	4.13	0.83	5.57	-0.26	6.19

## MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Falls
Unilever 498.50 12.25 2.50	Schneider 1490.00 -140.00 -8.75
Orange 235.00 2.00 0.86	Standard Chart 625.00 -58.00 -9.45
Assoc BR Food 491.00 2.00 0.41	Brit Steel 151.00 -10.50 -6.92
Cenitica 84.50 0.00 0.00	Billion 172 -11 -6.01

## CURRENCIES



Pound

at 5pm	Change	at 5pm	Change
Dollar 1.6940 -0.78c	1.6646	Sterling 0.9803 +0.27c	0.9807
D-Mark 2.9301 +0.42c	2.5128	D-Mark 1.7300 +1.01c	1.5085
Yen 214.97 +¥0.20	185.77	Yen 126.93 +¥0.73	111.60
£ index 103.90 -0.50	91.90	£ index 105.60 +0.10	96.20

## OTHER INDICATORS

at 5pm	Change	at 5pm	Change
Brent Oil (\$)	19.56 0.30	GDP	114.00 3.90 109.7
Gold (\$)	301.75 -6.35	381.40 RPI	159.50 3.7 153.81
Silver (\$)	5.06 0.03	4.89 Base Rates	7.25 6.00

www.bloomberg.com source: Bloomberg

## Standard Life set to take on banks with phone account

The competition for bank customers will intensify next year when Standard Life launches a telephone-based account to rival those offered by the high street banks, other insurers and new entrants like the supermarkets and Virgin. Tom Stevenson, Financial Editor, reports.

Standard Life, one of the staunchest defenders of mutualism, is to take on the high street banks by launching a telephone-based banking service next year. The life insurer said yesterday it had applied to the Bank of England for a banking licence, a prerequisite for a company wanting to take deposits.

A spokesman at the Edinburgh-based group said Standard Life was hopeful of

receiving the go-ahead from the Bank within the next few weeks and would start taking deposits early next year. It hopes to roll out a full range of services soon afterwards.

Standard Life is Europe's biggest mutual life insurer with more than 4 million policyholders and assets worth more than £57bn. It said yesterday it was in the final stages of applying for its banking licence.

Launching a banking service will not be a carpet-bagger's charter, the group said yesterday. The bank will be a wholly owned subsidiary and opening an account will not confer membership. Anyway, Standard remained committed to mutualism, its spokesman said.

Standard's service will operate from a call centre in Edinburgh, where it is based. It will run in parallel with a deposit account from the Bank of Scotland where it currently directs funds from maturing policies.

Until recently Standard Life and Bank of Scotland had a close relationship, with the insurer owning 32 per cent of the bank. Last year it raised £678m by placing all but 2.5 per cent of that stake.

Standard Life's decision marks the latest intensification of the competition for deposits, with supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsbury's able to offer attractive deposit rates because they are not weighed down by the high costs of the branch-based high street banks.

Last year, Prudential, Britain's biggest life insurer, moved into banking and was quickly followed by Scottish Widows and Friends Provident. Richard Branson's Virgin has responded by offering an all in one mortgage and banking service.

Standard Life's banking operation will be headed by Jim Spowart, who set up Direct Line's telephone-banking business.

## US sales figures put fear of inflation in retreat

The latest figures on the US economy helped the financial markets stay calm yesterday. The Dow Jones index had barely moved by late morning, while a bout of profit-taking brought the dollar back from an earlier level of ¥127.15.

Evidence of weaker-than-expected retail sales and prices at the factory gate in October built on the sense of reassurance Alan Greenspan, the Federal Reserve Chairman, had imparted earlier in the week. Although other indicators have confirmed that the economy is booming, with unemployment at its lowest for a quarter century, the Fed refrained from raising interest rates this week because of the recent stock market turbulence.

Retail sales fell by 0.2 per cent in October because of a big drop in car sales for the second month running. Excluding cars, the total was 0.4 per cent higher during the month.

Retail spending is expected

to pick up in the next month or two. "With Christmas just around the corner, stronger income growth bodes well for holiday sales," said Jonathan Basile, an economist at FISBC Markets in New York.

Prices charged by manufacturers edged up by 0.1 per cent last month, but remained 0.2 per cent lower than a year earlier. "Core" prices, excluding the volatile food and energy components, were flat in the month.

But their level in the latest three months compared with a year earlier has picked up sharply to 1.1 per cent, suggesting that producer prices have might passed their trough.

Despite the favourable figures yesterday, October's industrial output statistics, due on Monday, are expected to confirm that the economy is running at full capacity. If so, this will reignite the concerns about inflation triggered by last week's evidence on the tight jobs market.

- Diane Coyle

سكدا من الامم





**JEREMY  
WARNER**  
ON TURMOIL  
AT THE HIGH  
STREET BANK

## Why change is inevitable at NatWest

Something must be about to happen at National Westminster Bank. The press often gets it wrong when it turns the spotlight of scrutiny on a company in apparent turmoil, and much of the recent speculation concerning NatWest has been misinformed. However, the sheer quantity of it, and NatWest's continued inability to put a lid on it, all would tend to suggest that this is more than a problem of public relations, that there are fundamental difficulties and processes at work here. Even if something is not already afoot, it is likely soon to be.

Some, at least, of this speculation is almost bound to prove self-fulfilling. There are now such clear signs of disarray at NatWest that institutional shareholders will soon be demanding action, if they haven't already. Curiously, though, the best informed of this speculation is something that definitely won't happen. This is the old chestnut that NatWest should be merged with Barclays, a story which was probably first floated by Barclays itself and has now taken on a momentum of its own.

Nobody can blame Martin Taylor, chief executive of Barclays, for trying it on. If there is any possibility of being able to do it, Mr Taylor would be failing his shareholders by not pursuing the opportunity. The potential for cost savings and

monopoly profit, if such a transaction could be pulled off, might be vast.

The opportunity has also been quite cleverly pursued. NatWest seemed to put itself in play by holding merger talks, unsuccessfully, first with Abbey National and then with the Prudential. If those two aren't prepared to do a deal with NatWest, we certainly would, Barclays seems to be saying. At last here's an opportunity for the big league consolidation of the British banking industry so desperately needs, is the spin being put on it.

To be fair, Mr Taylor and his chairman, Andrew Buxton, both straightforward and realistic bankers, have always acknowledged that the competition hurdles would be formidable and possibly insurmountable. Even so, there seems to be a clear and well used strategy being applied here, which is that if you float the idea of ten enough, you might eventually wear everyone down and in time they could come to accept your point of view. At the very least, the possibility of a bid destabilises a major competitor.

In truth, the whole thing is not nearly as far down the line as some reports this week would suggest. There has been no approach by Barclays to NatWest, and it is not altogether clear that the Office of

Fair Trading has yet been consulted by Barclays on the competition issues.

On the other hand, there wouldn't actually be a lot of it in Barclays seeking confidential OFT guidance. It must already know what the answer would be; the combined bank would have such a dominant share of small business lending, retail outlets and credit card business that there would be no way of constructing such a merger in a manner that would avoid a Monopolies and Mergers Commission reference. Furthermore, the chances of the MMC approving such an anticompetitive takeover are so remote as to be scarcely worth considering as a possible outcome.

The whole idea, in other words, is just a lot of corporatist nonsense. Certainly it would be profoundly against the public interest. It is not even altogether clear it would be in the long term interests of shareholders either. The size of the management task in merging these two organisations could easily prove a lethal distraction during a period of rapid change for the banking industry.

Already the two main Scottish banks, Royal Bank of Scotland and Bank of Scotland, are outmanoeuvring their bigger brethren south of the border with forms of low cost, supermarket and gen-

erally more user friendly banking. Yesterday brought news that Standard Life is planning a low cost, high interest rate, telephone banking service, providing a new threat to the fat margins and profits of the established English clearers.

There may come a day, perhaps five years into the single currency after fully deregulated, no-frontiers banking has become a reality, and the newer forms of low cost banking are seriously entrenched in the market, when it might be possible for the competition authorities to consider such a merger. But for the time being, it is a complete non starter.

Where does that leave NatWest? Like Barclays itself, going it alone, seems to be the answer. The problem is that NatWest has so obviously misjudged and mishandled its affairs in recent years that it is not at all clear the present regime is up to the task. Derek Wanless, the chief executive, has recently set out challenging targets for improvement in return on capital and costs, which he is determined to achieve. He may or may not be given the benefit of the doubt by the City.

Unfortunately, the City does not appear inclined to apply the same degree of leniency to Lord Alexander, the chairman. Hired in the wake of the Blue Arrow de-

bacle, he seemed initially to do a good job in restabilising the bank. He also deserves credit for some necessary and well executed restructuring, particularly the disposal of NatWest Corp in the US. But the headlong expansion into investment banking has proved a costly mistake while NatWest's likely exit from this business looks like being as humiliating and shameful as that of Barclays. Meanwhile the core domestic business seems to have been allowed to drift. The same is true of Coutts, once a market leader in private banking.

Some senior management change therefore looks pretty much inevitable. Round at Barclays, the fiasco of the BZW disposal has rather knocked the halo from Mr Taylor's head, but at least his job isn't in doubt. Such has been the recovery in Barclays' fortunes under Mr Taylor that he needs to do quite a lot wrong before he loses his star status in the City. Barclays has achieved greater things than NatWest in the past three years, undoubtedly, but the challenge faced in its core domestic business is the same. It is very hard to see how it can expand in the new forms of low cost banking that will eventually sweep the market without undermining its present margins and customer base. Solutions are in short supply.

## Brown to legislate on fresh code for fiscal stability

The Chancellor of the Exchequer plans to enshrine his tough approach to government spending in the law. In his 'pre-Budget' statement later this month, Gordon Brown will announce plans to legislate on a new code for stability in the government's finances, reports Diane Coyle, Economics Editor.

Proposals for a "fiscal stability code" will be one of the highlights of the pre-Budget consultative statement, or "green budget", on 25 November. Mr Brown will extend his commitment to openness in economic policy to legislation on how tax and spending plans should be set. The Chancellor sees this as the logical extension of increased openness in monetary policy, where the requirement for the Bank of England to meet an inflation target and account for its success or failure is in the course of being incorporated in the law.

In future, governments will be required to publish clear rules

for public sector borrowing, provide full information on the public finances at least once a year, and account for their success or failure in meeting their borrowing targets. The proposed legislation would also enshrine an annual pre-Budget consultation exercise.

The plan is likely to please the financial markets, which have already broadly welcomed the new framework for setting interest rate policy. Mr Brown's reputation for austerity is reasonably well-established, but the City would regard self-imposed restrictions on government borrowing as an improvement. It would put Britain in the vanguard in terms of the openness of setting government finances, as only New Zealand and Australia have similar legally binding restrictions on tax and spending policy.

Elsewhere, the "pre-Budget" is expected to confirm the Government's existing commitment to limit its borrowing to no more than its investment spending - the "golden rule" - and to keep the ratio of debt to national output stable.

It will, however, update the forecast for the public finances, which will look more favourable than at the time of the July Budget thanks to the

strength of the economy. Most forecasters now expect the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement for this financial year to turn out lower than the Government's £11bn target.

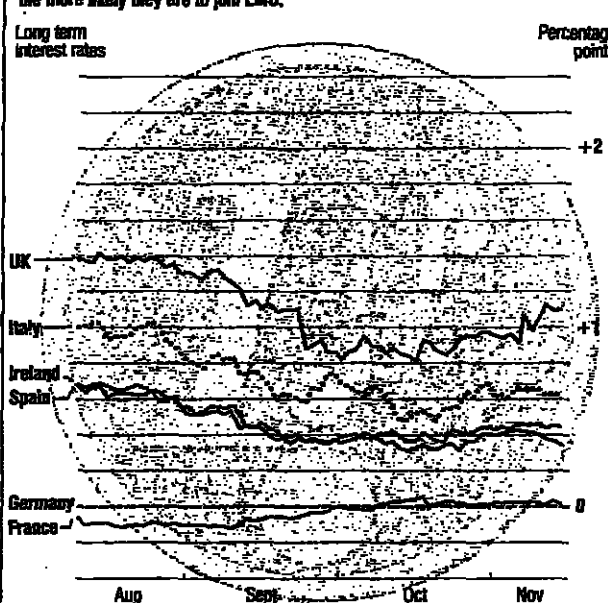
The document to be published by the Chancellor in 10 days' time will include, in addition, an analysis of the jobs market and the modernisation of the welfare state; a chapter on Britain's competitiveness; an assessment of fairness and tax, which will include progress reports of a few of the special reviews; and an updated economic forecast.

It will not cover public spending, as the commitment to hold to the planning target set by the Conservative government still stands. The comprehensive review of public spending will be completed by next summer, for the subsequent Budget. A main document will be accompanied by background papers, and other announcements will follow the Chancellor's Commons statement.

Although the Treasury is trying to stop calling it the "Green Budget" - because this misled people into thinking it was about environmental measures only - the document will be a shade of green, in contrast to the red hue of the actual Budget report.

### Who will be in EMU? The financial markets' view

The closer other countries get to the dashed baseline (Germany) the more likely they are to join EMU.



TOWARDS EMU: If the line moves towards the German base line it means investors no longer require such a high premium for holding that country's bonds compared to German ones, because they are confident 'the currency won't devalue against the mark'. In other words, they think that country will be locked into a single currency with Germany in 10 years' time.

AWAY FROM EMU: However, if they think the country won't be in EMU, that it will have higher inflation, and that there is a risk of a future devaluation against the mark, then they will demand an extra premium for holding that country's bonds, so the line will move away from the base.

### When will EMU start? The City Analysts' View.

The independent asked analysts from: Nikko Europe, Paine Webber, ABN Amro, JP Morgan, Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, Salomon Brothers, Goldman Sachs, HSBC, James Capel, UBS

Probability EMU starts on time:	83%	(83% last week)
Probability EMU is delayed:	15%	(15% last week)
Probability EMU never happens:	2%	(2% last week)

## Germany's deficit poses EMU threat

Germany's continuing struggle with its budget deficit, highlighted by figures released earlier this week, could jeopardise EMU, say some of the independent experts.

Julian Jessop of Nikko Europe, believes deficit difficulties could lead to an "all or nothing" EMU scenario. He said: "If EMU does go ahead, it is going to require a flexible interpretation of rules, leading to a broad EMU. But [the deficit] also increases the possibility that EMU won't happen at all."

On Tuesday, a finance commission reported that German tax revenues would be DM17.3bn (£5.9bn) lower than expected. This has prompted worries that the budget deficit could exceed 3 per cent of GDP, the Maastricht "ceiling".

"We're forecasting the budget deficit will be 3.2 per cent of GDP," said Heather Richardson of UBS.

Other experts believe that the budget deficit will fall below the 3 per cent level, but that the damage to its credibility has already been done. "Schemes like interest swaps, whilst being within the letter of the law, are certainly against the spirit of the Maastricht Treaty," remarked Mr Jessop.

## IN BRIEF

### IT firms lead the laggards among AIM companies

Multi-media and information technology companies dominate the list of worst-performing companies on the Alternative Investment Market (AIM). According to figures compiled by Datastream and ICV, the poorest performers since AIM was launched in June 1995 have been Omnimedia, a multimedia group, and First Technology, a media company, which both recorded a 98 per cent decline in their share price. Other poor performers included Clubpartners International, a golf course operator (minus 94 per cent) and Hanscom, a taxicab dealership (minus 89 per cent). The best performer has been Westmont Energy, an oil company whose shares have soared from 15p to 138.5p, a rise of 823 per cent. Other high flyers were Abacus Recruitment (plus 647 per cent) and Celtic Football Club (plus 320 per cent).

### Banks' ratings fall in Japan

The credit ratings of three major Japanese banks were downgraded by IBCA yesterday. The credit rating agency lowered ratings for the Asahi Bank, the Bank of Yokohama and the Tokai Bank, saying that "the fall in stock prices threatens large valuation losses on the banks' now excessively large stock investments". And the misery for the Japanese banks looked set to continue, as the Nikkei hit its lowest level for two years with a 334.75 point fall to 15,082.52. The latest Nikkei fall reflects disappointment over a package of policy proposals designed to bolster economic growth.

### Energy firm to cut tariffs

Independent Energy, the AIM-listed electricity supplier, is offering to cut 15 per cent from the electricity bills of small businesses when the market is thrown open to competition next April. The reduction is worth just under £2,000 a year on an average bill of £13,000.

### Eastern accepts Offer curb

Eastern Electricity yesterday became the first of the regional power companies (RECs) to accept the new price controls imposed by the regulator Offer. Customers will receive a 12 per cent reduction in bills over two years starting next April, worth £54 off the average domestic bill. The 14 RECs had until 5pm yesterday to accept the formula or decide to take Offer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

### Squeeze on exporters

Exporters are continuing to feel the squeeze, according to the latest CBI Regional Trends survey. In eight UK regions, the decline in export orders accelerated in the four months to October. But in Wales, the pace of deceleration had slowed and in the North and the South-west, declines had levelled off, the CBI said. Despite the weakening of sterling, export prices remain the most important constraint on export orders, according to manufacturers. Firms in five regions - Northern Ireland, the South-east, the North, Scotland and the South-west, expect export orders to rise over the next four months.

## Accountants settle De Lorean case Siemens buys US power business

The taxpayer is to get back just £3m after the Government yesterday settled its 12-year battle to extract damages from the auditors of the failed Belfast car company, De Lorean.

The two sides yesterday agreed to settle their long legal tussle outside court with Arthur Andersen, the international firm of accountants agreeing to pay the Government £18m compared with its claim of £300m. However, the Government's legal costs since the case began in 1985 are estimated to have reached £15m.

It will have to shoulder these itself, having decided to continue action

against Arthur Andersen in the US courts after a New York judge threw out its lawsuit alleging conspiracy, fraud and negligence in February.

The Government's case was that Arthur Andersen failed to alert it to frauds taking place at De Lorean and the parlous state of its finances. The company set up by John De Lorean in West Belfast to build his gull-winged sports car collapsed in 1982 after soaking up £77m of taxpayers' money.

Arthur Andersen's defence was that the Government had been aware early on of the company's financial problems but had been determined

to keep it open for political reasons.

The case had been due to begin in New York early next year. Arthur Andersen is still fighting a \$100m claim brought in parallel by David Allard, the trustee in bankruptcy for the De Lorean company. A spokesman for Arthur Andersen said: "Since we have reached a sound, sensible and reasonable agreement with the Government perhaps there is scope for a similar agreement with the trustee."

Arthur Andersen has paid a heavy price in other ways. It has not had a government contract for 12 years.

- Michael Harrison

Siemens, the German electronics and engineering giant, yesterday strengthened its grip on the power station market by acquiring the power generation business of Westinghouse of the US for \$1.5bn (£844m).

The deal fits Siemens into number two position in the world's £30bn power generation market, behind General Electric of the US, and creates a grouping with sales of \$4.5bn. Siemens bought the NEI Parsons power generation business from Rolls-Royce earlier this year.

The agreement involves only Westinghouse's fossil-fuel power station

business. The US group is seeking separate buyers for its nuclear energy systems business and another division which handles nuclear material for the US military and Department of Energy.

Westinghouse's power generation business has a workforce of 8,000 and sales last year of \$2.2bn. It supplies gas turbines and steam turbines. Siemens Power Generation had sales last year of \$3.2bn and has 11,500 employees. Together the two businesses will control about 12 per cent of the market compared with GE's 15 per cent.

- Michael Harrison

### Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling	Spot	1 month	3 month	D-Mark	Spot	1 month	3 month	Yen	Spot	1 month	3 month
UK	10000				14370	14383	14384	14385	100	160	160	160
Australia	24340	24340	24340	24340	14370	14383	14384	14385	100	160	160	160
Canada	20550	20550	20550	20550	14370	14383	14384	14385	100	160	160	160
France	65500	65500	65500	65500	14370	14383	14384	14385	100	160	160	160
Germany	23500	23500	23500	23500	14370	14383	14384	14385	100	160	160	160
Italy	11300	11300	11300	11300	14370	14383	14384	14385	100	160	160	160
Japan	14810	14810	14810	14810	14370	14383	14384	14385	100	160	160	160
Netherlands	83500	83500	83500	83500	14370	14383	14384	14385	100	160	160	160
Spain	9200	9200	9200	9200	14370	14383	14384	14385	100	160	160	160
Sweden	23500	23500	23500	23500	14370	14383	14384	14385	100	160	160	160
Switzerland	11300	11300	11300	11300	14370	14383	14384	14385	100	160	160	160
Taiwan	46100	46100	46100	46100	14370	14383	14384	14385	100	160	160	160
US	15100	15100	15100	15100	14370	14383	14384	14385	100	160	160	160

### Other Spot Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	16947	10000	Oman	06984	02350
Brazil	10777	10000	Pakistan	74567	44000
China	14033	82800	Poland	59348	33020
Czech Rep	55980	33030	Romania	61896	38400
Greece	57407	33030	Russia	98953	59800
Hong Kong	37985	22620	South Korea	88917	99550
India	33289	19643	Taiwan	82841	37000
Indonesia	82280	34000	Thailand	64822	36350
Israel	12763	27201	Turkey	30756	82500
Japan	09453	03035	UK	12228	36725
Norway	12653	81800			

### Interest Rates

Country	3 month	6 month	1 year	2 year	3 year	5 year	10 year
UK	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
France	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
Germany	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
Italy	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
Japan	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
Netherlands	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
Spain	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
Sweden	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
Switzerland	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
Taiwan	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
US	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%

### Bond Yields

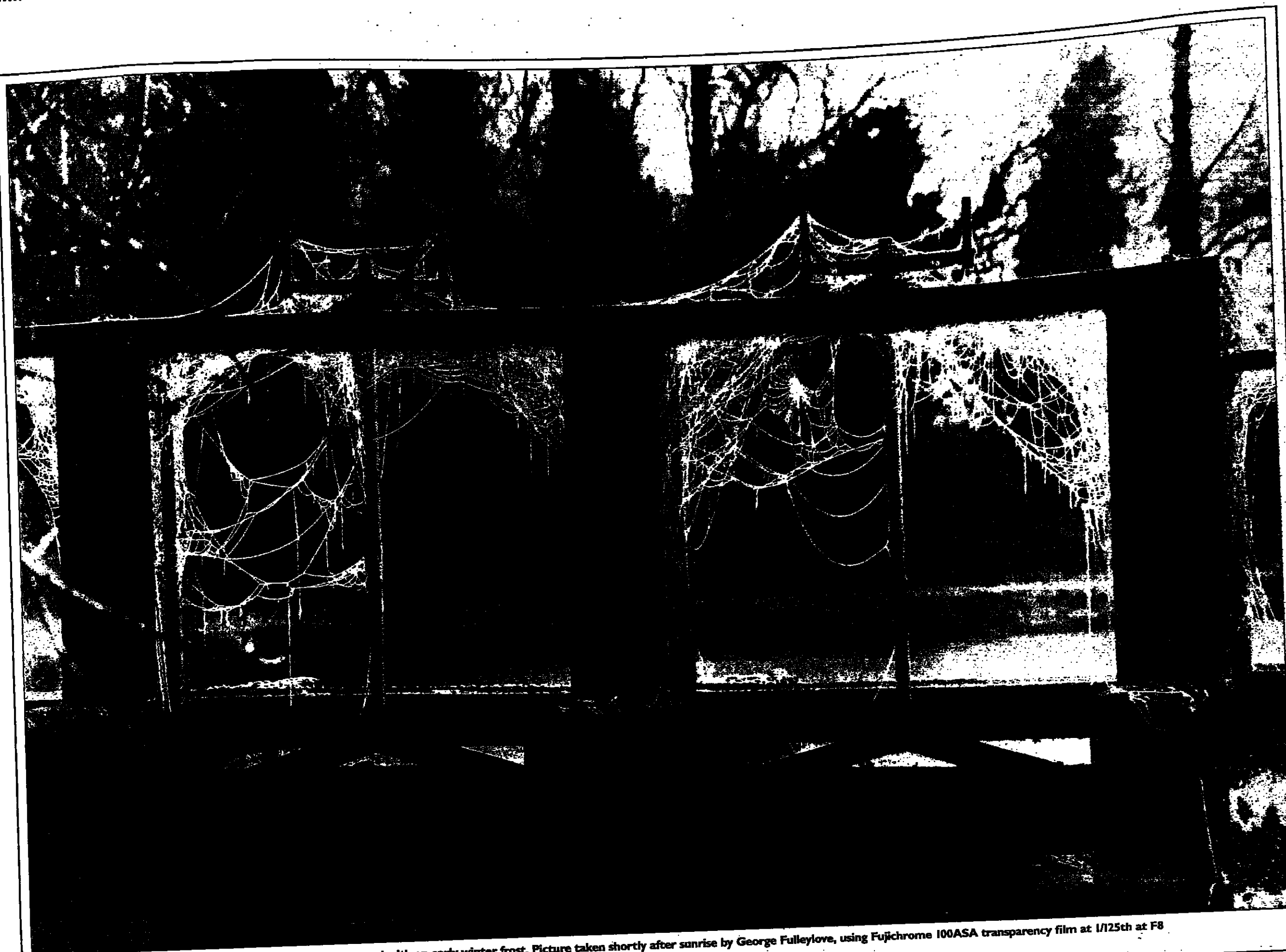
Country	3 month	6 month	1 year	2 year	3 year	5 year	10 year
Australia	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Canada	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
France	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Germany	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Italy	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Japan	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Netherlands	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Spain	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sweden	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Switzerland	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Taiwan	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
US	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

### Money Market Rates

Country	Overnight	1 week	1 month	3 month	6 month	1 year
UK	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
France	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
Germany	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
Italy	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
Japan	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
Netherlands	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
Spain	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
Sweden	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
Switzerland	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
Taiwan	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%
US	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%	7.25%

### Liffe Financial Futures

Long Gilt	Dec-97	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88
Short Gilt	Dec-97	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88
US Long Bond	Dec-97	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88
US Short Bond	Dec-97	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88	102.88
3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec-97	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25
3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec-97	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25
3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec-97	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25
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3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec-97	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25
3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec-97	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25
3 Mth Eurodollar	Dec-97	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92.25	92



Icy dawn: A sluice gate on the river Test in Hampshire encrusted with an early winter frost. Picture taken shortly after sunrise by George Fulleylove, using Fujichrome 100ASA transparency film at 1/125th at F8

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## TOMORROW IN THE NEW-LOOK, SEVEN-SECTION INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY



### THANK YOU WHAM!

From the depths of the Spice Age, it's time to reassess the definitive mid-Eighties pop stars

Plus

- **The best for your child** – a parents' guide to the 100 top state schools
- **Paul Smith** on the art of colour, selling, and creativity
- **Erica Jong** on what Louise Woodward has done to America
- **Tick tock** – artificial insemination and the single girl
- **Britain's tastiest puds** – recipes from the nation's leading chefs

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# TIME OFF

## TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 15 November 1997



Cool for cats: lions hang out with the insouciance you'd expect from the beasts at the top of the food chain

Photograph: Andrew Fraser

## Prides and prejudices

Laid-back lions, contemptuous leopards, Tina Turner lookalikes: all life is there at Tanzania's Tarangire wildlife park, as Richard Holledge discovered.

The sky is dark with clouds, the impala skitter nervously in the tall yellow grass, a giraffe cranes effortlessly above the thorn trees. As I wait for the extremely small one-engine plane to arrive on the landing-strip on the edge of the Serengeti wildlife park, I am being let into the dark world of Tina Turner's make-up secrets.

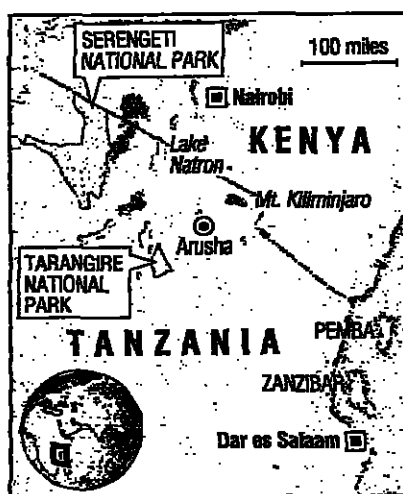
My confidante is Miss Hollie Vest from Las Vegas. She may not be a household name in Britain, but she went down

a storm in Sun City, that extravagant confection of varieties created out of the South African veldt, where for 19 months she starred as a Tina Turner lookalike.

It's all to do with getting a tan and keeping it, using lots of dark powder and foundation and, of course, donning a considerable wig. Hollie, by the way, is white, which makes the transformation all the more impressive, though it is fair to say that Hollie and Tina are similarly shaped and of an age.

Apparently, so convincing is her transformation that when Hollie/Tina was appearing at a club owned by Bill Medley (half of the Righteous Brothers) he didn't realise, upon meeting Hollie after the show, that she was indeed Tina.

No wonder there's an abiding sense of



unreality about life on safari. It's not so much the animals you see in the bush, it's the people you meet in the lodge: the grumpy retired headmaster who asked questions as if he were about to give you six of the best – or have you fed to the lions: the honeymoon couple from Chicago whose animal longings were plain to see; the flirty female from the rarefied rich pastures of Sunningdale, Berkshire, who was over for the week to watch her husband play a spot of polo in nearby Arusha.

Above all, there was Frank, a host at the lodge. A bit of a legend, Frank – a cross between Michael Heseltine and Errol Flynn, complete with china-blue eyes. It came as no surprise to hear that he had been interviewed by *Complete Woman* magazine for their series, "Bachelors of the Bush".

It was he who greeted me with a flourish and a bottle of cold Sprite, and introduced me to the Mashado Swala camp and the improbable luxury that typifies life on the range in north-west Tanzania. This was in the Tarangire National Park, south east of Arusha, and boasted accommodation in tents. We are not talking bivouacs here. This is serious luxury, with comfy beds, showers bursting with hot water, gold plate taps and those little pots of shower gel courtesy of Bromley.

The tents are scattered some way from the hub of the camp – the "mess" – which serves dry martinis, respectable South African white and elegant European food with all the aplomb you could hope for.

You don't just chance on these places. You can't catch a bus or thumb a lift into

the bush in the hope of finding a B&B. If you haven't booked in advance, the place to go is Arusha, some 40 minutes from Kilimanjaro airport, which is lined with organisations offering safaris. It's hard to know which to choose. For example, I was horrified to be overtaken by six vans all in a row, sporting the logo of the tour operators Abercrombie & Kent. It is impossible to enjoy the drama of the bush when you are in such a traffic jam. And how do you know whether your guide is prepared to make the effort and take the time to find the animals and explain what is going on? So it was with a sense of serendipity that I was taken to the Mashado Swala and met the dashing Frank.

The first glimpse of life in the wild didn't

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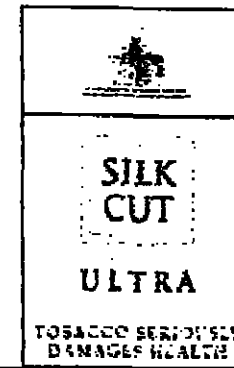
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# THE ONE

SMOKING CAUSES CANCER

Chief Medical Officers' Warning  
1 mg Tar 0.1 mg Nicotine



## Prides and prejudices

From previous page  
feel, well, very wild, despite the impala which grazed in the camp grounds. All those Martins, probably. But an evening by the fireside with Frank quickly put me right. Sometimes whole prides of lions will settle in a camp, padding around the tents, roaring a bit. Buffalo wandered unhindered. It can be dangerous. That's why every evening a guard with a spear and a torch guides you safely from tent to dining-room, and even to the loo.

Certainly, on a particularly blowy night, with the tent banging around like a full rigger off the Cape of Good Hope, I was woken by the unmistakable sound of a lion's growl. I leapt out of bed to peer through the awnings at the shadow of a lioness and cubs settling down yards from my canvas cot. In fact, the cold light of day revealed them as a boulder and a thorn bush. But it could have been.

The sense of unreality persists. Even the animals seem to be part of the conspiracy. The Tanzanian park authorities do not allow foot safaris, so most of your animal-spotting is from the safety of a four-wheel drive vehicle. The guide for the day, Stanislaus - named after a character in the Bible, he insisted rather puzzlingly - used to come to a quiet halt. "What do you see?" he would ask. You'd look across at a herd of nervy wildebeest and cautious zebra and look again. In the foreground were lions, hanging out with the insolence you expect from the guys at the top of the food chain.

They are so laid back that they can hardly be bothered to turn their heads in the direction of your clicking cameras. Leopards contemptuously lounge in the branches of trees, tails hanging down, giving interlopers the hard stare. Hyenas, with their high necks and round shoulders, oaf around like bouncers on the run. Cheetahs sit coyly in the shade of an acacia presenting their cuddly little cubs like gift-wrapped Christmas presents. And just to attract a little limelight, 30 ostriches

sashay across the plain, all bouncy and feathery like so many Beverley Sisters.

The show, however, is stolen by the elephants. I stood for half-an-hour above the river Tarangire, a muddy little affair, as more than 60 padded quietly along, splashing gently, pausing only to have a quick roll in the mud. Unhurried, one-paced, confident and calm. A big family - elephant herds are all related - on a jolly day out.

You realise that all this calm is deceptive when you come upon a zebra, its innards ripped out, a slash from a lion's claw on its rump, its body already expanding in the heat; or you get a pungent whiff of the carcass in the jaws of a hyena. Then it all becomes real. And, perversely, the more you sit quietly, the more the detail of the drama somehow brings home the mightiness of it all.

A sex-starved mongoose clings on for dear life as one of his mates tries to knock him off the object of his passion; bat-eared foxes pop out of the ground, their little round ears a signal to all and hungry; agama lizards, iridescent in blue, red and green, practise their push-ups on the warm rocks.

One detail which delighted me almost as much as the sighting of the big beasts was the secret of the whistling thorn. Each branch carries a little, hard fruit which can be inhabited by an ant. The termite drills a hole, and when the wind blows the trees whistle.

You look up, to catch a glimpse of screaming flocks of birds around the waterhole; plovers screech, and stardogs, glorious in bright blue and white, come hopping up to catch the crumbs from your picnic. And from these details you gaze to the horizon many miles away, across an unending expanse of yellow grass, trees with thorns as sharp as two-inch nails, and rounded outcrops of rock, one of which has a hollow decorated with carvings by itinerant Masai, who use the place for their annual circumcision ceremonies. At last, a sense of the history, a feeling for the wildness.



Show stealers: a herd of elephants ambles away from their watering place

Photograph: Andrew Fraser

### TAKING OFF FOR TANZANIA

#### When to go

Tanzania is relatively dry and cool from June to October. Rains are heaviest in April and May, with lighter spells in November and December.

#### Getting there

The closest airport to Tarangire is

Kilimanjaro International, served weekly on Sundays from Heathrow via Entebbe by Alliance Air (0181-944 5022). The lowest fare is £539.80 return including UK and Tanzanian taxes. Bridge The World (0171-911 0900) has a fare of £505 return on KLM via Amsterdam from a number of UK airports. Departure tax of US\$20 (about £12) is payable for the return.

#### Getting in

British passport holders need a visa. For

the application form for a three-month tourist visa, send a stamped addressed envelope to the Tanzanian High Commission, 43 Herford Street, London W1Y 8DB (0171-499 8951). Return it with your passport, two photos and £38. It takes a week, or 24 hours if you apply in person.

#### What to read

Footprint's East Africa Handbook 1998 has just been published, price £14.99.

#### Where to stay

Richard Holledge paid £240 per night to stay at Mashado. This covers full board, flights, drives, guide and park fees. You can book direct through Mashado central reservations, PO Box 14823, Arusha, Tanzania (00 255 57 6585); send e-mail to Mashado@habari.co.tz; or book in the UK with Africa Travel Centre (0171-387 1211). On Safari (0171-823 5900) or Carrier Tours (01625 582006).

## She's got a ticket to ride, but they don't care

There is surely no worse travel nightmare than this, writes Simon Calder. It is 4.30am, and you are 6,000 miles from home at a check-in desk at the world's highest international airport. You have just learnt that your mother has died suddenly.

Thanks to the heroic efforts of your family, assisted by the BBC World Service, you have been tracked down while travelling in South America. Your father has booked and paid for the journey back to Britain to enable you to attend the funeral. But now the airline representative is saying that there is no record of any booking.

That was the experience suffered by Nicola Medlik at the hands of American Airlines at La Paz airport. Even though she had both the reservation reference and details of her father's credit card, airline staff initially denied the existence of a booking on the flight to Miami. They then agreed that a seat had been reserved, but insisted that the ticket had not been paid for.

Nicola's father, the distinguished tourism academic Professor S Medlik, had booked the trip through British Airways and paid for it with his Access card. "I thought it was a foolproof way of making sure my daughter could get home," he says.

When, however, American Airlines said there was no ticket waiting, Nicola suggested that the staff call either the credit card company, or the US office of the airline, to confirm her story. They declined to do so (because, says the airline, telecommunication links were faulty) and said she would have to buy a ticket.

Her offer to pay by cheque, drawn in dollars on a US bank, was rejected. Eventually she managed to find an automatic teller machine that accepted her card. It paid out just enough cash for her to buy the ticket.

At Miami, British Airways had her onward ticket to London waiting, and she arrived in time for her mother's funeral. Her father was understandably concerned and called BA to try to clear the matter up. In his words: "They were utterly indifferent to my view that I expected them at least to look into the matter, since I had made the reservations with, and paid for them to, BA. I was passed on to four different people and explained to each of them what had happened. They insisted that this was a matter between me and American Airlines and nothing to do with BA; they even refused to make a note of my name and telephone number so that we might discuss the matter later."

Professor Medlik was also horrified by the attitude of American Airlines: "Despite knowing the circumstances and my daughter's distress, the AA manager and staff at

La Paz airport appeared quite happy to let her miss her mother's funeral."

Some weeks after the bereavement, the Medlik family finally received apologies from the two airlines. American Airlines pointed its corporate finger firmly at BA, "... since your letter indicates that payment was made to them. We have no record of receiving details of this from British Airways."

BA's director of marketing, Martin George, accepted responsibility in a letter to Professor Medlik: "Clearly we are at fault for not setting up the pre-paid ticket advice correctly. Our reservations manager has taken up this matter to ensure greater care is taken in future. I apologise for the considerable inconvenience and upset you and your daughter experienced." Mr George also refers to the attitude of BA staff: "I am very disappointed with the lack of help given by our people. Our customers are top priority at British Airways and we should have made every effort to solve this problem. Please accept my apologies. We will do better for you in future."

Professor Medlik regards BA's response as "a handsome apology", but had to wait more than a month before the £500 double payment was refunded. He is less impressed with American Airlines: "They were not very forthcoming about the behaviour of their staff, which was at best indifferent and at worst callous. However, customer care seems to leave

A survey carried out this week by 'The Independent' suggests the experience of the Medlik family to be an exception. We contacted 23 of the leading airlines operating from the UK. All of those who responded promise extra care for passengers needing to travel urgently.

All the airlines which responded make humanitarian provisions for passengers who have suffered bereavement. Such a privilege applies to close family members, but most airlines will extend this to include a common-law partner - including one of the same sex - or anyone else who is especially close.

The responses from Cathay Pacific and British Midland are typical: "Staff are trained to be flexible to meet the needs of passengers on an individual basis"; "All reservations supervisors and team leaders have the authority to look at distressing situations and to make the appropriate flight arrangements".

Some airlines, however, lay down more specific guidelines. If a passenger needs to buy a ticket, many will waive early-booking or minimum-stay requirements for cheaper tickets. Aer Lingus, for example, has an official "compassionate fare" set below full

economy levels. United Airlines offers the lowest available fare and waives conditions. Iberia and KLM, in contrast, sell the appropriate publicly available fare.

If you have to travel at a busy time, the flight may be fully-booked. Most airlines will "priority waitlist" you, which means that as soon as a seat becomes available, you get it. British Airways goes further: "If a flight was full, our customer service staff in the UK and overseas would endeavour to find a seat in any cabin if necessary to try and ensure their departure. We could also arrange transfer to another carrier free of charge in some circumstances." Large airlines with frequent departures on extensive networks are able to explore alternative routings to help a passenger reach a destination in the minimum time.

The trickiest question is about how passengers demonstrate that this is genuinely an emergency. Depressingly, there is evidence of people falsely claiming a bereavement so as to qualify for a cheap ticket or find a space on a flight. "We sometimes get calls for such assistance but find that some callers never come back when they are asked for proof. Such requests are always for full, long-haul flights," says Air France. El Al says: "We rely on the integrity of passengers. Only in extreme cases would we ask for proof." Most carriers will ask for a death certificate or doctor's note, but discretion is exercised - if a passenger

needs to get a flight in the next couple of hours, this may be waived.

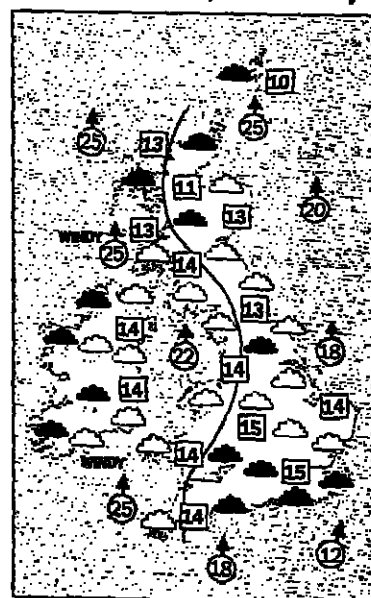
Two airlines, American and Air Canada, operate discounts retrospectively. The passenger buys a full economy fare, then upon supplying proof of the emergency a refund is made. American says: "This is the most effective way of helping people who are genuinely distressed." On Air Canada this arrangement is an option; you can, instead, supply evidence at the time and buy a discounted ticket immediately.

One final piece of the jigsaw: how to contact a relative who is in a distant corner of the world. The BBC World Service (0171-240 3456) broadcasts a very limited number of appeals on its English-language service. Each case is decided on its merits, and assessed according to the likelihood that contact will be made - e.g. the knowledge that the person has a short-wave radio.

The airlines that participated in the survey were Aer Lingus, Air Canada, Air France, Air India, Air New Zealand, Alitalia, American Airlines, British Airways, British Midland, Cathay Pacific, El Al, Iberia, Japan Airlines, KLM, Lufthansa, Qantas, Thai International, United Airlines and Virgin Atlantic. The airlines that declined to respond within the three working days in which we invited replies were Aeroflot, Continental Airlines, Malaysia Airlines and Singapore Airlines.

## WEATHER

### The British Isles, noon today



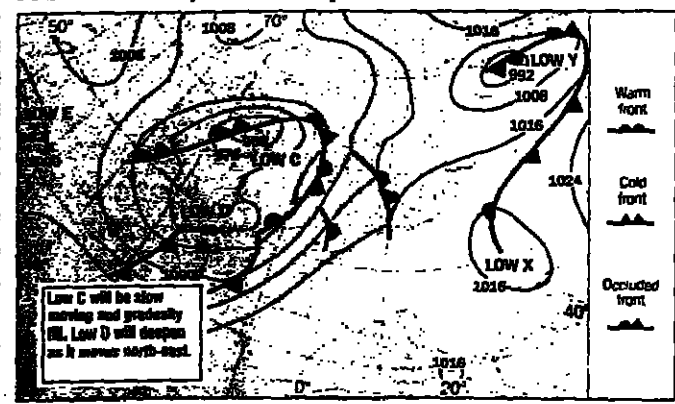
Yesterday's weather (mm): cloudy (S), fair (N), fog (E), heavy rain (W), snow (NW), sunny (SE)

Abberdeen	8-18	Cardiff	8-18	Exeter	8-18	London	8-18	Manchester	8-18	Newcastle	8-18	Nottingham	8-18	Sheffield	8-18	Southampton	8-18	Stirling	8-18	Wolverhampton	8-18
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### General summary and outlook

Eastern Scotland will have a good deal of dry and mild weather, but it will be on the grey side. Western Scotland and Northern Ireland will be dull and windy with spells of rain, especially over the hills. England and Wales will have a mostly cloudy but mild day with limited bright spells. There will be a little drizzle here and there, but any significant rain should be confined to the west where it will also become windy. Sunday will bring rain to much of the UK, although the south-east may stay dry. It will be windy, with southerly gales over many western coasts and hills. Despite this, it will be rather mild. On Monday and Tuesday there will be further rain and strong winds, with the worst of the rain likely in the west, whilst the east stays drier. The end of the week will see the chance of colder, drier weather in the north and east with further rain in the south and west.

### Atlantic chart, noon today



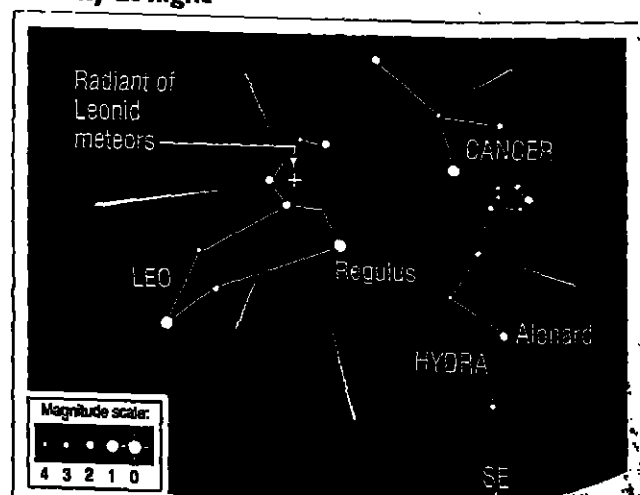
World weather most recent available figure at noon local time

Algeria	12-20	Amman	12-20	Baghdad	12-20	Bombay	12-20	Buenos Aires	12-20	Calcutta	12-20	Cairo	12-20	Colon	12-20	Hong Kong	12-20	London	12-20	Madras	12-20	Manila	12-20	Medan	12-20	Mumbai	12-20	New Delhi	12-20	Perth	12-20	Rangoon	12-20	Seoul	12-20	Singapore	12-20	Tokyo	12-20	Yokohama	12-20
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### AA Roadwatch

London, A1 between Watford Way, Mill Hill Circus and Fiveways Corner. Carriageway reduced to two lanes for long term roadworks until 31st May 1998. Wiltshire, M4 J16-J17 Swindon to Chippenham. Contrailwork with two lanes each way and a 50mph speed limit until 28th November. Greater London, M1 between J6-J5 Watford area. Roadworks and a contraflow, with off peak and overnight lane and carriageway closures. A 50mph speed limit also in place. Until 22nd December. West Midlands, M6 at Three Lanes North and two lanes South. 50mph speed limit in force with additional lane closures until 19th December. West Yorkshire, M1 J43-J42 Shorston to Lofthouse (M62). A contraflow and a 50mph speed limit are in place until 13th July 1998. A803 East Dunbartonshire, Glasgow Road. Night Roadworks at Ballinloch Road until 9th December. Cambridgeshire, A14 between Huntingdon and Farnborough. Lane closures until 19th November. Nottinghamshire, M1 J26-J25 Nottingham Roadworks and contraflow until 22nd November. Greater Manchester, A56, Old Trafford Roadworks until 19th January 1998. South Yorkshire, M18 J2-J3 Doncaster. Contraflow until 21st November.

### The sky at night



Leonid meteors appear to radiate from a point in the 'Sickle' of Leo. This chart shows Leo over the eastern horizon as he appears at about 3 a.m. this week.

This week the Earth is due to plough through a stream of dusty debris that has broken off Comet Temple-Tuttle. This hurrying meteor shower, peaking around Monday or Tuesday night. Unlike most meteor showers, the Leonids are not an annual affair, year in year out. They only come up with good displays when their parent comet is fairly near Earth - on a cycle that usually repeats about every 33 years. Anticipation is mounting because the last truly spectacular performance by the Leonids was witnessed in 1966, and meteor numbers have been increasing since 1994. No one can be sure how many will be seen this year. The only thing to do is to watch and find out. The constellation Leo, containing the radiant point of the shower, currently rises in the early hours of the morning.

Jacqueline Milton

مساحة الأصل



# 3/CITY BREAK

## 48 hours in ... Istanbul

You need a break – and a short cut to the soul of a city. Each week, *The Independent* provides a prescription for the perfect weekend break. This week, *Claire Gervat* and *Simon Calder* spend 48 hours in Turkey's largest city.

### Why go now?

Because Istanbul is arguably the greatest city in Europe, and Asia. Because you are 10 degrees closer to the Equator. And because you can become a Turkish lire millionaire by exchanging just £3.22.

### Beam down

British Airways (0345 222111) and Turkish Airlines (0171-499 4499) fly twice a day from London Heathrow to Istanbul; Turkish Airlines goes three times a week from Manchester. Turkish Airlines has a special offer from Manchester of £150 return (including the swingeing £30 tax). If you travel on the 5pm flight from Heathrow you pay £194 return, including tax.

### Set your bearings

You would be forgiven for thinking that many of the city's 12 million residents have come to the airport to meet you. If you're in a rush and feeling flush, get a taxi into town. Pick it up from the official stand and you should pay what's on the meter, between about £7 and £10.

Otherwise, offer a couple of pounds for the short ride to Yesilkoy station and take the wonderfully ramshackle railway around the coast, and past Topkapi Palace to Sirkeci station – which opens up to the heart of European Istanbul. The centre of the city is Sultanahmet Square, where you'll find the tourist office and a good free map.

### Check in

The Sultanahmet area has a huge number of hotels in all price ranges. Claire Gervat stayed at the Mavi Guest House (00 90 212 516 5878), round the corner from Topkapi Palace, where rooms start at £9, including breakfast. Simon Calder paid £10 a night at the Aladdin Guest House, just south of the Blue Mosque (00 90 212 516 2330). There's also a former prison nearby, converted into a Four Seasons hotel. Current guests pay upwards of £130 for a room, but they do, at least, have the option of checking out when they want. A more affordable option is the nearby Hotel Empress Zoe (00 90 212 518 254), simple and elegant, with doubles from £40.

### Take a ride

The best Bosphorus crossing is a source of great debate, and the only way to form a view is to do some research: criss-cross the neck of water between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea at 25 pence a time, and revel in the ever-changing views.

### Take a hike

Many of Istanbul's cultural attractions are within easy walking distance of each other, so you can combine culture with mild exercise. Starting in Sultanahmet Square, take a short stroll down the Hippodrome, now a tiny park with just a few reminders of its chariot-racing days. Half-way down is the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, remarkable as one of the few places in Istanbul where you can look at carpets without having to buy one. From there you can go round to the old bazaar and the Mosaic Mu-

seum, then through an archway to the front of the Blue Mosque and across the park to Aya Sofia. If you have any energy left, head round the corner and past a row of restored Ottoman houses, then follow the tramlines down to the hectic ferry terminal at Eminonu.

### Lunch on the run

If you've made it down to the waterfront, grab a snack from one of the nattily dressed boatmen who moor among the ferries and cook up fish on precariously bobbing grills. It's an enjoyable sight, and even more heartening when it comes to paying for your sandwich, a snip at 35 pence. There are also the ubiquitous kebabs, spiced and delicious, a far cry from Britain's flabby imitations.

### Cultural afternoon

Head back up the hill to Topkapi Palace and an insight into life as an Ottoman ruler, or a member of his household. Don't miss the views over the city from the terraces in the fourth courtyard, or the ornate Baghdad Kiosk. The bad news is that the most interesting section of the palace, the Harem, can be visited only on a guided tour, which you have to book half-an-hour beforehand. This wouldn't be such a problem if the group were smaller, or if the guide were not trying to conduct the tour in two languages at once. Ignore the words and concentrate on the lavish tiled, painted and gilded interiors instead.

### Window shopping

With around 4,000 shops, the Covered Bazaar must have the largest range of retail opportunities on the planet – particularly of old silver jewellery, carpets, leather goods and designer fakes. The displays could tempt even Scrooge into extravagance. Your only obstacle to window-gazing in the bazaar will be the determined shop owners trying to lure you inside and part you from your cash. On the other hand, with the current exchange rate, why resist?

### An aperitif

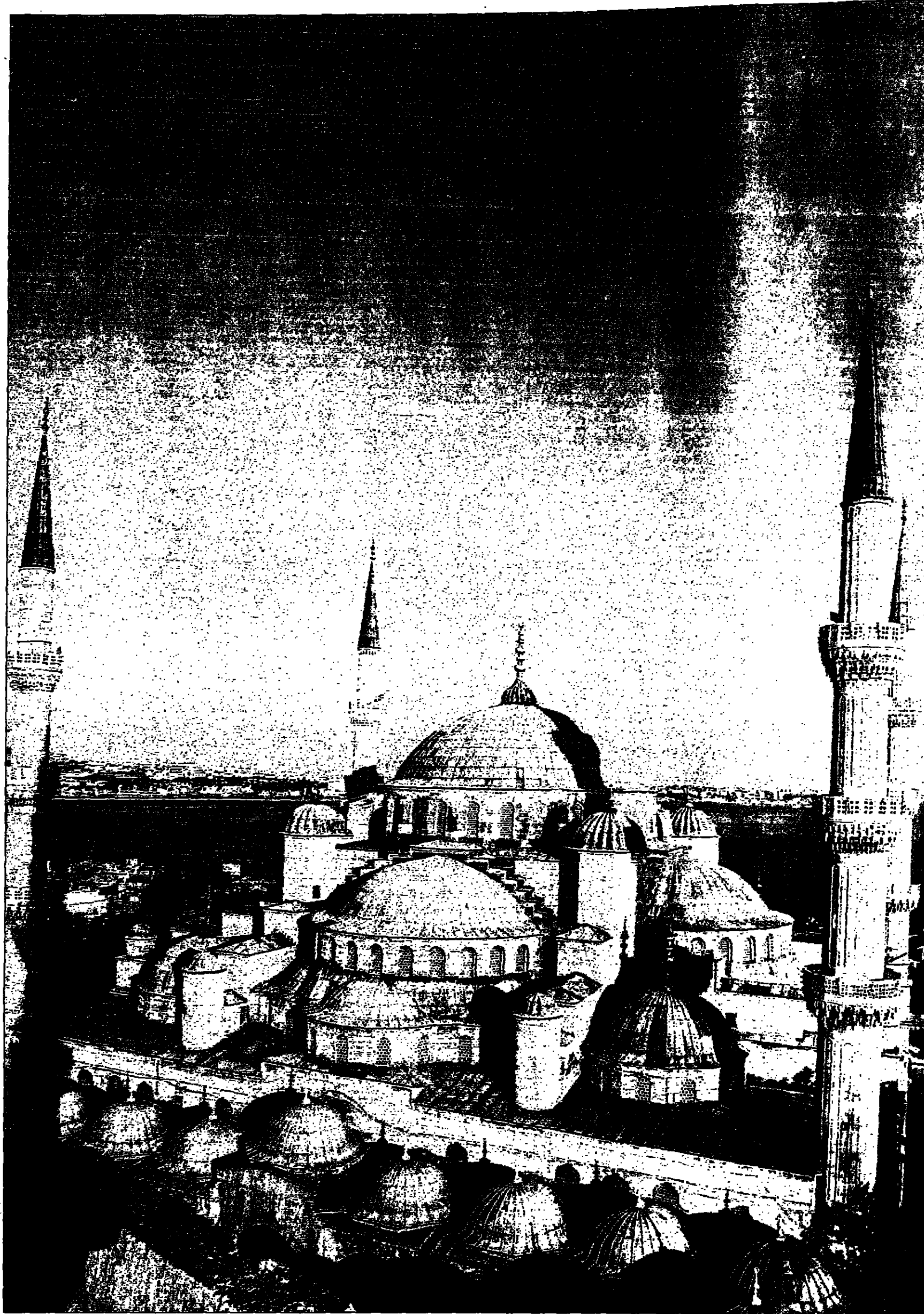
You'd think that Sultanahmet would be teeming with waterside bars, where you could while away the hours before dinner. But the local traders, usually so good at thinking up pleasant ways for visitors to spend money, have missed out on this one. Instead, head up the Bosphorus to Ortakoy (on the European side, beside the private university) to check out the drinking haunts of Istanbul's trendy liberals.

### Demure dinner

Turku Café and Bar, in Beyoglu at Imam Adnan Sok 9, serves up traditional food in hearty portions to an appreciative crowd of locals. The other main attraction is the live music: Turkish folk songs sung with feeling, and not just by the musician (there's only room for one). A huge meal with a beer shouldn't cost more than a fiver.

### Sunday morning: go to church

The Blue Mosque is, along with Aya Sofia, the city's defining landmark, and even if you think you don't want to go inside there are plenty of persistent guides who will try to persuade you otherwise. Inside, the walls are largely covered with the blue tiles that give the building its name, but the main impact is from the sheer size of the place. The solemnity is rather spoiled, however, by all the bare-footed tourists carrying their shoes around in green plastic bags.



Defining landmark: the Blue Mosque, so called because of the colour of the tiles inside

Photograph: JHC Wilson/Rupert Harding Picture Library

### Bracing brunch

Just across the road from the Blue Mosque is Lale Restaurant, whose main claim to fame is as the Pudding Shop in Midnight Express.

Pity the poor hippies who turn up there now in search of authentic seediness. It looks much the same as the other restaurants in the street, with the exception of its incongruous tartan tablecloths.

### A walk in the park

People do not go to Istanbul to enjoy a gentle stroll amid pleasant parks and gardens. But if you want to leave the city behind, take a taxi to the edge – the crumbling, ancient walls that protected the western flank.

Make for Tekfur Saray, the doddery Byzantine palace of Constantine Porphyrogenetus. As you wander through its wide open spaces, you feel a sense

of emptiness and isolation that eludes you everywhere else in Istanbul.

### The icing on the cake

... or rather, the icing sugar on the Turkish delight. Don't wait to stock up until you reach the airport for your return trip – the boxes they sell there are hopelessly padded and ferociously priced. Get your sugary stuff at the Covered Bazaar instead.

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SIMON CALDER

Ronnie Biggs signs autographs with a flourish and the phrase "My kind of luck". The real reason Brazil's Supreme Court has just agreed that the Great Train Robber can live out his days in Rio was in case he couldn't afford to leave the country. On Monday this week, travellers about to leave Brazil found the country's departure tax had multiplied five-fold from £11 to £55.

The new rule is intended to persuade residents (such as Mr Biggs) to holiday at home, but it may also be used as a revenue-raising device to fleece foreigners - just like Britain's Air Passenger Duty. Rumours among airlines and agents have been rife all week about when the tax hike might be applied, and to whom. Some believe all passengers are being clobbered with immediate effect, while others have been told that only locals will be affected and that New Year's Day is the chosen date. Brazil's airports tend to be lively places at the best of times. The effects of this increase in creating yet more chaos do not bear thinking about.

A favourite technique among travellers to countries with excitable economies is to bury the departure tax in a spare sock and spend every last *cruzeiro, cruzado or real* (a few of the currencies that Brazil has tried in the past decade) before the journey home. What happens when you turn up at Rio airport only to find the tax has increased by a factor of five, and that you are £44 short? Three suggestions in increasing order of desperation: (a) borrow the cash from a fellow traveller; (b) wait until your permitted stay expires and ask to be deported; or (c) investigate whether any Brazilian trains are known to carry large quantities of used banknotes.

Brazil is one of dozens of nations spending a small fortune on a presence at the World Travel Market which takes place in London this coming week. Another is Kenya, a country which has not been getting the best press possible in the last three months. To quote the Foreign Office: "Since mid-August there have been a number of violent incidents in Coast Province, in which local people have been killed and properties burned... game reserves and other tourist areas are generally safe but muggings and armed attacks can occur anywhere and at any time."

Tourism authorities usually work hard to counteract the fall in visitor numbers that can result from advice like that. Croatia, for example, has just announced that it will subsidise charter flights from the UK next summer.

Kenya, though, has just added around 10 per cent to the cost of a holiday. Starting today, British visitors need a visa to visit the East African country. The good news is that you can get it at the airport when you arrive, as well as at the High Commission in London: the bad news is that a single entry visa costs £35 (the good news is that this is a five less than the figure first announced on Wednesday).

The Immigration Department in Nairobi says the move is a response to the British government's decision, last year, to charge Kenyans for UK visas. Lots of other countries, from Turkey to the Dominican Republic, have implemented such reciprocal charges after the UK has changed the rules in what many feel has been an arbitrary and clumsy way. But the timing and cost of Kenya's new layer of bureaucracy is astonishing.

It comes a fortnight after Britain's Air Passenger Duty doubled. The combined effect of the increase is sure to make make travellers cross Kenya off the Christmas holiday list. Before 1 November, you would have handed £22 direct to the UK and Kenyan government in taxes. From today, that amount more than triples to £67. A side-trip to Zanzibar adds another £62.

Yesterday Thomson Direct (0990 502580) offered me a week's holiday in Majorca, departing this morning and staying in a good self-catering apartment, for exactly that total: £129, including tax.

Next March, the London Docklands Development Corporation gets statutorily wound up. Until then, it seems to be doing its utmost to winding up tourists.

At the tourist information centre in Docklands in east London, you are given a map showing the Thames Path along the north shore, for example. As a piece of tourism infrastructure, this trail is fairly flawed: for almost all its length it's not a path and there's no view of the Thames. Any tourists attempting to follow the map would find themselves up Bow Creek without a paddle.

The Docklands Experience gets stranger still when you watch the video extolling the region's virtues. You are given the surprising news that Canary Wharf is as close to the Bank of England as is Oxford Circus. Not only is this surprising, it is also completely incorrect. However you measure it, Canary Wharf is at least a mile further away.



In Mémilmontant you join the French in their favourite pastime of posing with style. Photos: Geraint Lewis

## The hippest bar hop Paris can offer

The coolest parts of Paris are, of course, where the hippest locals congregate. Kate Mikhail offers a guide with street cred.

A weekend in Paris can easily turn into a long, extended bar and café crawl, with the odd gallery thrown in. Nothing wrong with that - but the problem is where to go to avoid other tourists, pay reasonable prices for your *demis* and mingle with the local in-crowd.

Bastille is no longer *à la mode* and a suggested night out there will probably earn you a scathing sneer from Parisian trendies. They, meanwhile, prefer to head further north and east. And it's in Mémilmontant, armed with a nonchalant attitude and a confident pout, that you can join the French in their favourite pastime of posing with style in movie-set surroundings.

If you're planning a night of serious drinking, it may be a good idea to line your stomach in nearby Belleville, one of the most colourful and interesting quarters; it is home to a large north-African population and Paris's second Chinatown - though a large number of the restaurants are, in fact, Vietnamese. The Dong Huong and Tin Tin Vietnamese restaurants are particularly good, and if your French is a little rusty the Tin Tin has a photo display in the window showing the dishes on offer.

Relaxed and well fed, you proceed to the bars. Mémilmontant is about a 10-minute walk away from Belleville; just enough time to work up a thirst.

Head south and take a left along rue St Maur, which will lead you all the way to rue

Oberkampf, the new-found centre of Paris's night-life.

The walk will take you through a busy residential area, which is rarely quiet. The local bars - as ubiquitous as the dog excrement that covers the pavements of Paris - are just that, extremely local. I can never resist peering in, and am never disappointed. The last time I took this walk I saw two elderly women, both 80 if they were a day, with white hair piled high and lipstick perfectly applied, sitting at a bar, deep in conversation with the barman, ready, it seemed, for a long night ahead.

As you approach rue Oberkampf, one bar on the right-hand side of the road stands out, or rather, its warm, colourful interior draws you in. Les Couleurs is a wannabe squat bar, with posters and flyers Sellotaped to walls that are genuinely distressed. Coloured fairy lights wander over the ceiling, and candles drip from walls and tables. It is a relaxed bar, and the dress is about as casual as things get for Paris: the huge hole in the underarm of the owner's T-shirt is a proud display of down-dressing. Banquettes and chairs are grouped around small tables and if you want to start the evening slowly, you can settle down to a mint tea and game of backgammon.

A short walk on from here, further down rue St Maur and left on to rue Oberkampf, you will find the Café Charbon, one of the first bars to make its mark as Mémilmontant established itself as the place to be. The Charbon dates back to 1886 when it was a *café théâtre*. A few years ago, it was just a large, dark and dusty bar with a couple of billiard tables and a handful of regular customers. Now, after careful

restoration, it is generally crammed in the evenings - and it's a lively place to pass a Sunday afternoon. A young, well-heeled group, with an alarmingly high proportion of small goatee beards, crowd along the bar which is overhung by old-fashioned gas lamps, and staffed by hyper and not over-friendly staff. At the weekend, there's a DJ who plays acid jazz and flirts with passing customers.

The food, served until 11pm, is considered very good, and at 30F for starters and 50F for main courses it is not overpriced. The Charbon also does a good line in cocktails for 38F-40F, which is cheap by Paris standards. Across the road, La Mercerie is a lighter, brighter bar, with orange, rough-sponged walls, and Latin jazz on the turntable.

Paris bars shut down at 2am and last orders are called a good 10 minutes before that - but don't despair, you can always head off to the sleaze of Pigalle or one of the large, all-night *café* bars such as that in Place de la République, where you can stay all night and enjoy a final nightcap as Parisians wander in for a coffee and chaser for breakfast.

*Dong Huong and Tin Tin restaurants, rue Louis Bonnet, 11th arrondissement - Metro stop Belleville (booking not necessary, but last orders 10pm-10.30pm).*  
*Les Couleurs (00 33 1 43 57 95 61), 117 Rue Saint Maur, 11th arrondissement - Metro stop Mémilmontant.*  
*Café Charbon (00 33 1 43 57 55 13), 109 rue Oberkampf, 11th arrondissement - Metro stop Mémilmontant.*  
*La Mercerie (00 33 1 43 38 81 30), 98 rue Oberkampf, 11th arrondissement - Metro stop Mémilmontant.*

## A tale of Roman traffic and divine intervention

A new collection of travellers' tales celebrates the highs and lows of life on the road. From a field of 3,000 entries, editor Dan Hiscocks selected 111 for inclusion - among them, Marshall Young's winning story of lost innocence in Italy.

I was 20. It was my first time in Rome. It was my first time abroad. In theory it was a college study trip; in reality it was more a chance to soak up the atmosphere (and a little Lambrusco) of a foreign land. After three days, our group had already "done" the usual tourist sites. At the end of a hard day's slog around the Vatican, I had struck out on my own and was wandering the streets with no direction in mind - just beguiled by the very novelty of it all. By now it was rush hour. The streets were noisy and fume-filled. As I walked along, a line of nuns approached me. There were about 10 of them, seemingly arranged in order of height like a set of living Russian dolls - though not very living; the youngest looked about 70. As we came together on the pavement, the leader of the troupe (herd? gaggle? what is the collective term for nuns?) held out her arm and spoke to me. My Italian

does not stretch much beyond "Una birra, per favore," so I had no idea what this wizened lady was saying.

I gave my best Gallic shrug. Not satisfied with this, she merely repeated herself, this time a little more insistently.

"Sorry, I'm English... inglese," I said lamely.

Clearly this was not what she

considered a valid excuse. Stretching out her wrinkled arm, she gave me a shove (a firm shove) towards the traffic. I could not understand what was going on. Seeing my look of bewilderment, she pushed again, with much unintelligible gesticulation, until I had one foot off the pavement.

With the third shove I finally got the message: she wanted help in

crossing the road. She wanted me, the archetypal innocent abroad, to walk into four lanes of Italian rush-hour traffic and somehow hold it back while the nuns crossed to the other side.

For a second I considered doing a runner, but the stony glare from the indomitable lady left me little choice - I had to give it a go. I stepped hesitantly on to the tarmac and edged

into the traffic with arms outstretched. Maybe it was the sheer incongruity of a lanky, tweed-jacketed figure amidst the speeding cars, or maybe the drivers were simply bewildered that anyone could be stupid enough to try such a thing - but it worked.

The cars stopped. Like a modern-day Moses, I held back a sea of honking Fiats and buzzing Vespas. Late drivers leaned on horns and bung out of car windows, gesturing madly, but still I held my ground. Even pedestrian crossings offer little immunity from Italian drivers; they merely weave around you; so looking back, I suppose my "miracle" had more to do with the presence of the nuns than anything I had done - running over a lady of the cross must be a sure bet for eternal damnation.

Anyway, the nuns hobbled across the street and went on their way without so much as a "Grazie". As the last scuffed foot mounted the far pavement, I raced for the sanctuary of the kerb and the traffic flowed once again. Even today, 15 years later, I still flinch if I see a nun coming towards me in the street.

*"Travellers' Tales from Heaven and Hell", price £6.99, is published this week by Travellerseye, 30 St Mary's Street, Bridgnorth, Shropshire WV16 4DW.*

### GREEN CHANNEL

Trains are kinder to the world than cars, so the fact that railways around the world are accelerating is good news. The 1997 World Rail Speed Survey published by *Railway Gazette International* shows Japan has stolen the fastest train title from France with the new bullet train: it travels between Hiroshima and Kokura at an average speed of 162.7mph.

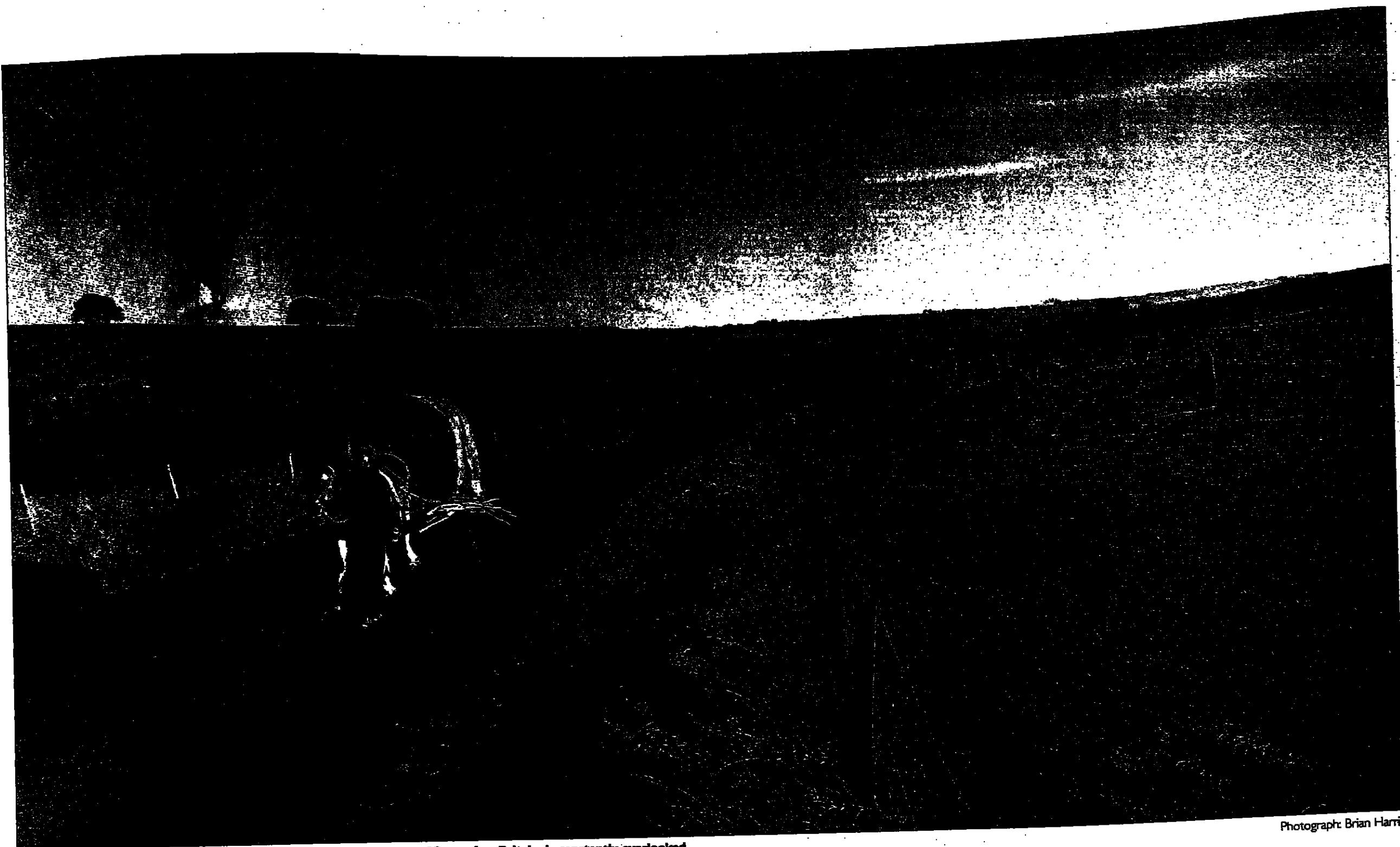
France reverts to second place for the first time since TGV services between Paris and Lyon were launched in 1983. The current fastest train in France averages 158mph, between Lille and Charles de Gaulle airport. Climbing rapidly to third place are cross-border high-speed trains, such as Thalys between France and Belgium, Cisalpino between Italy and Switzerland, and Eurostar between Britain and France.

While in the UK, Eurostar is limited to 100mph. Britain's best efforts are on the Great North Eastern Railway, which limps in sixth with 112mph for the London-York run, and on Great Western's London-Bristol corridor. Not far behind, and catching up fast, are Poland (in 13th place), China (15th) and Saudi Arabia (16th).

### RED CHANNEL

The compiler of the *Railway Gazette International* survey, Colin Taylor, warns that speed freaks heading for Nepal and Eritrea are likely to be disappointed. Dr Taylor computes the fastest trains in all the world's nations with railways. It is possible, therefore, to assess the countries with the slowest fastest trains. He believes that the winner/loser is Nepal where the fastest express averages just 6.5mph during a 90-minute journey - about half the speed of a city cyclist. Dr Taylor said yesterday that he believed it may have stopped running (though a cynic might say that, at such a low speed, it would be tricky to tell), in which case Eritrea takes the prize with a train averaging 11mph.

Dr Taylor was speaking at King's Cross station in London, where he was launching an attempt at the world's longest rail journey, from Vila Real on the Portuguese Algarve to the Vietnamese capital, Ho Chi Minh City. Among the many hazards threatening to derail the 11,000-mile trip are flooding on the German/Polish border, strikes and random cancellations. Leaves on the line are not expected to be a problem.



Photograph Brian Harris

Still standing: Avebury, which contains at least three of the wonders of Stone Age Britain, is constantly overlooked

## Coming (almost) full circle

This week a 'new' prehistoric creation was discovered near Bristol. But there is much more to see along the road at Avebury. Though our predecessors left barely a standing stone unturned, reports Simon Calder, what remains is still magnificent.

Here's a spooky thing. The grand megalithic shambles known as Avebury is guarded by a triangle of white horses hewn from the chalk of the Wiltshire Downs. Each is three miles distant as the pterodactyl flies. I reckon that the centre of gravity of this triangle (located, since you ask, at the point where the bisectors of the three angles meet) is the car park of the Red Lion. The truly remarkable phenomenon is that the pub stands in the middle of England's greatest Stone Age site. Absurd.

Absurd. When you wander through the pocks of prehistory around England's West Country, that word keeps recurring. Take Stonehenge, the awesomely austere circle that finds itself pincered like a prehistoric walnut between the A303 and the A344. Next Monday morning, the Culture Secretary Chris Smith visits Stonehenge to

try to crack the old chestnut of how woe-fully Britain neglects its ancient history. While he is in that part of the world, he could usefully head north across the pretend Cold War battlefield that is Salisbury Plain and call in at the monumental prehistoric collation at Avebury – which contains at least three of the wonders of Stone Age Britain, yet is constantly overlooked at the expense of smaller, sharper Stonehenge.

Now another wayward sibling has returned to the fold, with the discovery seven miles south of Bristol of a 400ft prehistoric prototype for the Millennium Dome. Its discovery is a miracle of magnetometry, but ultimately the site is an exercise in virtual archaeology. For the real thing, start at the Red Lion.

And to get there, you must take the absurd A361. While it swaggers across Wiltshire from Devizes to Swindon, it cuts clean through the middle of a huge henge (this term denotes a rampart of earth surrounding a moat; if you think about it, an unlikely arrangement for the purposes of defence, so there must have been a more cerebral cause for its construction). The visitor who pauses at the Red Lion will reel at the sight of the largest stone circle in Europe.

Or, at least, the remains of it. Carving initials in a standing stone at Stonehenge is not quite in the same league as the desecration that has been wrought upon the monoliths that are ranged around a three-quarter-mile circumference. The survivors are magnificent: tall, lean shafts of ragged stone exploding from grass chewed smooth by a platoon of sheep, interspersed with plumper, dumber slabs of rock that bulge in several competing directions at once. Each weighs perhaps 20, 40, even 60 tons. The tragedy is that so few remain.

No barbed wire separates the visitor from the stones; tourism is not the culprit. Originally the circle comprised a congregation of 98, which survived for about four millennia until the meddlesome Middle Ages. Many of the stones were toppled in the name of God; others fell in a frenzy of recycling, when 18th-century speculators devised a way to turn prehistoric paganism into profit.

First dig a pit, adjacent to your chosen victim. Fill it with sticks and straw. Get the brawniest locals to topple the stone into its grave. Start a fire beneath it, then barter with sledgehammers. Best of all, alternately heat and cool it. Then haul off the material to build cottages.

Which is why, like a set of pre-NHS

teeth, the ring is full of stumpy little gaps (or gappy little stumps). The man we have to thank for there being anything much left on show is a marmalade magnate.

Alexander Keiller used much of his family fortune to become involved in a more profound (and in many ways much stickier) form of preservation than jam. In the philistine 1930s, he was appalled at the way so significant a site could be abused. So he bought up the whole village, and demolished some of the cottages in order to preserve the continuity of the circle. Tablets mourning missing monoliths were placed where once they had stood.

A fine museum, bearing our marmalade man's name, occupies an outbuilding belonging to the expansive Avebury Manor. The museum is not large, and does not seem to be haunted, but it has a permanent resident. Charlie, or Charlotte, is a three- or four-year-old child who died thousands of years ago. (S)he was found ceremoniously and lovingly interred, as if merely sleeping.

West Kennet Avenue sounds like a road on a housing estate on the fringes of Swindon. It is, in fact, an ancient way that winds unsteadily against the contours to the south, staccato stones marking its course with an appropriate approximation.

After a mile it loses the battle with the A4, a much greater west road. But hop across the fence and you can ascend, through fields of winter crops bruised and battered by November, to a thunderously large tomb.

Linford Christie could sprint along the top of the West Kennet Long Barrow in 10 seconds. It resembles a Nissen hut that has been buried beneath layers of turf for greater invisibility, but is another megalithic curiosity – a burial place as intricate, in its own way, as the pyramids. One big difference was that the remains of the chosen few were shuffled around every so often. Ancestor worship seems to have been genuinely a moveable feast. You can enter the first few chambers and wonder at the brave Britons who built it.

Looking northwest from West Kennet, you just wonder.

What possessed a people scraping a living from these downs to create an additional hill, sticking out like a sore thumb from the gentle rolls of Wiltshire. No one knows quite the purpose of Silbury Hill, and several excavations have failed to find many clues.

All that can be deduced is that the construction relied upon a highly sophisticated technique of internal walls (was this Britain's entry for the world pyramid

championships, 2000BC?) and that the builders began in August – entrapped Stone Age ants give that away, since their wings sprouted only in summer.

A track spirals to the top, but is these days closed to visitors. Twenty years ago, when Silbury Hill was part of the mandatory mystical warm-up for the Glastonbury Festival, I scampered the 130 feet to the summit. The sense of wonder increases with altitude, as you gaze upon the waves of Wiltshire galloping off towards those sentinel white horses.

Absurd.

By car, Avebury is located just north of the A4 between Calne and Marlborough.

By public transport, the nearest sensible railway station is Swindon. From the nearby Swindon bus station, Thamesdown bus number 49 operates from Swindon approximately hourly during the day. The journey takes about half an hour and costs £1.30 each way. On Sundays, the journey is covered by Wilts & Dorset service number 6.

The Alexander Keiller Museum (01672 539250) opens 10am-4pm daily. Admission is £1.50 (free to members of English Heritage and National Trust).

The Red Lion serves excellent food between noon and 2pm daily.

## We're on our way to Wembley – the Sistine Chapel of football

A tour of Wembley stadium may be a football fan's idea of heaven. But how about other members of the family who are dragged along as well? All the Muirheads, winners of a day out with 'The Independent', were unexpectedly impressed, as Alistair Morgan observed.

If football stadiums, as communal places of worship, are modern-day churches, then London's Wembley stadium is the equivalent of the Vatican's Sistine Chapel. Images of Wembley, filled with 70,000 screaming fans, are commonplace, but its daily tours attract considerably fewer visitors. For £21, a family of four can take a tour that includes lifting a replica of the Football Association Cup to a background recording of crowds roaring over the loud-speaker system.

On the day we were there, the tour group included a cosmopolitan mix of parents, foreign sightseers and football pilgrims. Mr and Mrs Muirhead took their two teenage sons, John and Neil, and signed up for the tour with only a quarter of the family fully expecting to be impressed. As an enthusiastic football fan, Neil was typical of many

visitors, but it would be fair to say that the rest of the family was equivocal.

The tour lasts around 90 minutes (the length of a football match) and provides enough variety to keep the congregation interested. It begins with a chance to decide whether Geoff Hurst's famous "goal" in the 1966 World Cup final against Germany did indeed cross the line, before leading the group into the Wembley Stadium control centre. What the tour guide doesn't know about the facility is probably not worth knowing and, in tandem with Des Lynam's smooth prerecorded interjections via video, a steady stream of facts is provided.

A short trip to the stadium cinema illustrates the overriding sense of history. Over the years Wembley has housed much more than football matches; this glimpse into the past portrays the twin towers in the same light as Big Ben and Tower Bridge.

For Mr and Mrs Muirhead, their elder son John and other visitors who would not list football as their favourite pastime, the most successful sections of the tour were behind the scenes.

Viewing the minuscule, untidy box where Des Lynam and guests work during big games revealed the true wonder of television, while a visit to the Queen's private box was highly entertaining. The lavishly decorated room, while modest in size, set a thousand images running through the

mind. When our guide explained that one particular door led to Her Majesty's private bathroom, and then told us that we were forbidden so much as a glimpse inside, the mind began to boggle.

The non-football-loving members of the Muirhead family were visibly engaged by the tour. Despite Wembley's unimpressive location and its ugly, concrete foundations, it was hard not to be impressed by the sheer size of the venue.

"That's where Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones performed 'Start Me Up'." the guide would point out. "This is the spot where the flame was lit during the 1948 Olympic Games in London." "The stage for Live Aid was over there."

For football fans such as Neil, every room, seat and corridor conjures up images of countless matches watched on television. If you have attended a big game at Wembley the sounds, smells and sights (and

the outrageous prices) come flooding back. The players' changing rooms, adorned with replica England football shirts, are immaculate. As the sacred retreat of the players, you would never see pictures of these rooms on the TV, and the effect was not lost on Neil.

Fittingly, it was in this room that he plucked up courage to ask two footballers, from Tromsø in Norway, for an autograph. They were playing against Chelsea FC the



Cup floweth over: Neil Muirhead lifts a replica of the FA Cup  
Photograph: Rui Xavier

following evening in the European Cup Winners' Cup but they had come, like pilgrims, to Wembley (if they were looking for inspiration they weren't entirely successful, as their side lost 7-1 the following night). In addition to signing their names they also took photographs of one another in the changing-rooms.

Everyone, though, was disappointed when told that they were not allowed to tread the famous Wembley turf or so much as kick a single football. "It's a bit rubbish to come all this way and not be allowed to touch a single blade of grass," was Neil's comment.

But this was not enough to spoil the tour. "A surprisingly good time" was Mrs Muirhead's sporting verdict on the day's outing.

Wembley Stadium tours (0181-902 8833) are held 10am-3pm daily except match days: adults £6.95; children and OAPs £4.95; concessions £5.95

The Muirhead family was invited to participate in a day out for 'The Independent' after sending us their nomination for the Independent/English Tourist Board Family Holiday of the Year award. Their suggestion – The Flower House, Goongillings Cottage, Constance, Falmouth, Cornwall (01326 340630) – was announced as the winner last week.



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## Carving a course across the Atlantic

Most skiers want to reach the slopes as quickly as possible and stay there for as long as they can. So why is it that North American resorts, involving long-haul flights and big time differences, are becoming increasingly popular? Cathy Pocke has some answers.

The mountains of the US began to gain in popularity a decade ago, as a dependable alternative when good snow in Europe was patchy. Once there, it is easy to see advantages. The snow is reliable, but if it doesn't arrive naturally, artificial snow is readily available. This ensures a much longer skiing season than in Europe. Also, many Americans construct their holidays piecemeal, instead of buying a package, making accommodation more flexible.

In winter it is possible to find a day's skiing almost anywhere in the northern half of North America. But the serious ski slopes are concentrated in five main areas. The best known may be the Rockies – the American states of Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and Utah – but the most popular destinations for British skiers are the Canadian Rocky Mountain resorts of Whistler and Banff. California has also become popular, encouraged by the increase in non-stop flights to Los Angeles and San Francisco. On the east coast, the resorts of Vermont and New Hampshire offer a more cosy atmosphere than the Wild West towns of Colorado, although the climate can be icy. And the fastest growing



The resort of Vail, Colorado, just a stop away from Birmingham, London and Manchester

Photograph: Tim Stand/Stockfile

area, challenging New England in its accessibility from Europe, is the state of Quebec and its largest resort, Mont Tremblant.

The main reason for the popularity of the Canadian Rockies – apart from the strength of the pound against the Canadian dollar – is accessibility. Banff and Whistler can be reached by direct scheduled flights to Calgary and Vancouver respectively, and this winter Britannia has introduced a twice-weekly charter to Vancouver. Direct flights confer a big advantage

when weather conditions are difficult.

Many of the holidays on offer have some element of flexibility. Some are tailor-made. Neilson is one of several operators to allow a ski package to be booked without any flights at all, which means that you can add a few days' skiing to a business trip or a visit to friends. Others allow a city stopover, Boston and Vancouver being among the most popular choices; and some offer two-centre holidays, combining a Canadian and an American resort. Crystal allows you to

drive between Quebec and New England, or to fly between Rocky Mountain resorts. Virgin Ski offers a combination of skiing and a completely different activity: Tall Buildings and Tall Mountains, for example, takes in Boston and the New Hampshire resorts. And for the first time, Ski the American Dream is offering add-on holidays from Denver to Hawaii, Florida, Arizona and Mexico.

Ski safaris, which offer skiing in several resorts in the course of the same holiday,

are being promoted in Canada by various operators. Ski Independence's five safaris depart on specified dates and allow the participants, who need to be to be skiers of at least intermediate level, to ski up to nine different areas during the 15-day trip.

Not only are there more flights to Canada this year, more Canadian resorts are available to package tourists. Frontier Ski and Ski Safari are both offering holidays in Fernie, a small resort well known in British Columbia, but so far more or less untouched by the international market.

As the Canadian market continues to expand, many operators are also promoting more US destinations. SkiWorld and Neilson are both offering the New England resorts of Killington and Stowe; Crystal has holidays in Crested Butte and Telluride; and this is the first season for Thomson in Aspen and its neighbour Snowmass.

Colorado resorts will also benefit from a new charter service this year: Monarch Airlines is now flying into Denver every Wednesday and Saturday. Direct scheduled flights between Denver and the UK ended three years ago when the city's new airport demanded higher landing fees. Now the airport at Vail is muscling in, offering overnight one-stop connections on American Airlines from Birmingham, London and Manchester.

Smaller companies pride themselves on knowing their areas and advising you where to go – or not to go. Ski North America Direct will sensibly advise a beginner against Jackson Hole, and point him or her in the direction of Breckenridge or Steamboat. Its brochure has maps and all sketches of resorts.

Two places at opposite ends of the continent, Mont Tremblant in Quebec and

Mammoth Mountain in California, both pride themselves on being family resorts, and this year they are putting a lot of effort into promoting their new features.

Mont Tremblant used to be an old-fashioned ski village, until it was thoroughly modernised at huge expense: it is now the most popular resort on the Canadian east coast. A children's centre now transports its clients up the nursery slopes on a magic carpet, and provides child care until 9.30pm on two nights of the week. This year the mountains have been zoned into areas for snowboarders, slow skiers and mogul fans. Birdwatching trails have been added to the off-piste opportunities; a floodlit area, the Xzone, offers skiing and other activities three nights a week.

Mammoth Mountain's high-speed quad lifts and floodlit slopes should increase skiing time. There are reduced-price lesson/life/equipment packages for absolute beginners, and from April onwards you can ski in the morning and have a round of golf in the afternoon. Mammoth is a six-hour drive from Los Angeles, but an internal flight to Reno shortens the transfer time.

Increased accessibility is probably the most important development in transatlantic skiing holidays. This could be the time to take advantage of the laid-back lifestyle of North America.

Frontier Ski (0181-776 8709); Ski Safari (0171-262 5069); Ski Independence (0990 550555); Neilson (0990 994444); Crystal (0181-399 5144); Virgin Ski (01293 617181); Ski the American Dream (0181-552 1201); Ski North America Direct (07000 325325); Skiworld (0171-602 4826); Thomson (0990 329329).



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## Colorado and the Keystone tops

At this time of year, Keystone in Colorado is already open for business night and day, as Cathy Pocke discovered.

"Hi, I'm Jerrie. I'm really excited to be teaching ladies' day, and I'm really looking forward to skiing with you all. What are your goals for the day, ladies?"

This was the beginning of a Thursday ski class last season at Keystone, Colorado, aimed at "women who want to gain more confidence in their skiing", and made available because market research claims that women prefer to be taught by women – and also, apparently, to ski in women-only groups.

There appears to be very little about the skiing in this part of Colorado that hasn't been scrutinised by some kind of survey. But although there were customer comment forms in the ski rental building, I was surprised to find that no one asked me to review the purchase, or carving, skis I hired. The Americans call these Super Sidecuts and they're shorter than traditional skis. With a paddle shape at the top, and a narrower part where the foot is attached, they are intended to help carve better turns. Whether they do or not is quite difficult to judge when you ski only for an occasional week here and there; but I felt in better control.

and I certainly skied faster down the mountain than I ever have before.

This turned out to be useful in trying to avoid the snowboarders. Disappointingly for the skier, Keystone has given up its snowboard-free status. In recent years it was the only resort in the state that catered for skiers only; now the all-encompassing research has shown that less money is made from skiers who like board-free slopes than from snowboarders. So since the beginning of last season skiers have had to dodge the boarders here, as they do pretty much everywhere else.

Keystone is a cluster of condominiums and lodges that has operated as a ski resort for less than 30 years. Last year the resort merged with the group which manages Vail, and the number of building sites in evidence suggests that plenty of expansion is planned. For now it retains the atmosphere of a village – even though,

### SKI TIP

If you ski off-piste and in trees remember to watch the spaces and not the trees. Your body will follow your line of sight and take you through the snow rather than having to focus on avoiding the trees.

Chris Exall

unlike nearby Breckenridge, it had no settlement until the skiers moved in. Many of the condos are privately owned, and are still lived in by their owners for at least part of the year. This makes them more individual and luxurious than they might otherwise be.

Four people staying in a two-bedroom condo will pay little more per person than they would when booking a package in England and staying in a hotel. But most condos have a bathroom for each bedroom, a large sitting room with a log fire, a fully equipped kitchen, and an extra room containing a large jacuzzi – a perfect place to relax and contemplate the mountains.

While you soak in the hot water, you can judge the performance of the harder souls who are night-skiing: Keystone is one of the few resorts that keeps some of its lifts open – and its pistes lit – until 9pm, giving about 50 per cent more skiing time than usual to those who have the stamina to enjoy it.

For those who prefer to ski or snowboard by sunlight, the lifts open at 8.30am and lead up to a section of slopes on three mountains, Keystone, the North Peak and the Outback. These provide an astonishing variety of skiing, and in my party – which consisted of one seriously advanced ski-mountaineering type, two intermediates and one complete beginner – we all found some to challenge us.

But in addition to its own three mountains, Keystone has benefited from the merger with Vail, and is now connected to Vail, Beaver Creek and Breckenridge by a shuttle coach service.

This makes the whole area into something like an American version of France's Trois Vallées. Although it isn't possible to ski between the four resorts, the lift tickets are all interchangeable, which means that it's cost effective as well as easy to ski in different areas on the same day, or at least in the same holiday. And although it is run by a different company, the free shuttle bus between Keystone and Arapahoe Basin still operates every half hour, adding an extra selection of slopes.

Keystone suffers from the shortage of direct flights into Denver from the UK, although five international airlines now fly into the airport of Vail Eagle, only an hour from Keystone by road. Resort Express runs a frequent minibus service out of both Denver and Eagle airports, which will drop you off in Keystone, and the main car hire companies have desks at the two airports.

The most appealing thing about Keystone at this time of year is that you could be there now, doing parallel turns down the slopes instead of just reading about skiing. Keystone opened for the new season four weeks ago, and expects to remain in daily operation until 3 May next year.

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# 9/SKIING

## No room on the slopes

Anyone expecting a mass of late-booking ski bargains this year is living in Cloud Cuckoo Land, according to Thomas Cook. Stephen Wood reports on the industry's boom.

If all goes well, I will be skiing in Arctic Sweden today. I'd never heard of the resort of Dundret until a few days ago; but when somebody told me that snow had fallen, the lifts were running and the Japanese downhill racing team was about to start its pre-season training there, I thought: why not?

You'd better get moving on it, for example, you are hoping to go skiing during the Christmas break. Andy Perrin, managing director of Crystal, Britain's biggest ski company, says that the week beginning 27 December is close to being fully booked, and skiers "will really have to shop around to get a holiday". And if you were planning to kit yourself out with an O'Neill fleece and some Salomon snowboarding boots from the Snow+Rock catalogues, you're too late: those items - among several others - have already sold out. The wholesaler Terry Lingard (whose Outdoor Leisure company imports K2 skis, Smith goggles and several ski-wear ranges) is cheerfully "expecting to clear out the warehouse this year".

The 1997/8 season is turning out to be a bonanza for skiing. Talk to anyone in the business, and you are likely to hear that they have "never seen anything like it".

Tour operators were happy enough last year when, after three years of decline, the number of skiing holidays sold in the UK increased by about 10 per cent. This season the increase is - so far - at least twice as big. Crystal's Andy Perrin says that bookings were "massively up" in February and March this year.

"It was almost as if people had come back from their skiing holidays with change in their pockets," he says. "Every beer or coffee had been cheaper than they expected, thanks to the value of the pound abroad, and the exchange rates meant we could put 'Save up to £300 per couple on 96/97 prices' on the cover of our previous brochure for this season. The result was

that our early-season bookings were sometimes running at a level 90 per cent above last year's."

Skiers are, Perrin says, "going where the value for money is: the big winners are those countries which have 'benefited' most from exchange rate variations." And that means the old favourites, France, Austria and Switzerland. Crystal's bookings to Switzerland are up an astonishing 390 per cent - although, as Perrin points out, this year's brochure tripled the size of the skiing programme there. But no destination is doing badly: "Italy's growth has slowed down - that's as bad as it gets," he says. The only holidays that are hard to sell are those in Christmas week itself - because the 20 December start is too early for most families - and self-catering packages, "because people can afford something better".

Perrin's figures are for the growth in the number of holidays; he has not noticed a big increase in the amount spent per holiday. But Joanna Yellowlees-Bound has. She is managing director of the independent operator, Erna Low, and one of the never-seen-anything-like-it ("not in 15 years of selling ski holidays"). She says that "trading-up" has helped her company to double its turnover this year. The fact that it has become the UK sales representative for the Pierre & Vacances apartment agency, the biggest in France, has contributed to the growth; but Yellowlees-Bound says that Erna Low's turnover on holidays to La Plagne and Les Arcs, a similar range to that offered last year, are up 80 and 100 per cent respectively.

Why the sudden rush to go skiing? Windfalls, exchange rates and the feelgood factor are a big part of it. They have pushed Thomas Cook's winter holiday market up 20 per cent, says its spokesman, Richard Grummit. But skiing is outperforming the rest of the market, he says, with sales in its Ski Direct division up by 30 per cent. Last season's weather obviously has a lot to do with that, as Crystal's Andy Perrin says. "Not only did everyone get great value for money, they got great snow, too."

In the equipment business (where Snow+Rock's sales are up 25 per cent), growth has been stimulated by

yet another factor. Steve Hazell, Snow+Rock's marketing director, says the enthusiasm at last week's Daily Mail Ski Show at Olympia suggested that "everyone wanted to get buzzed up again". Sales of skis have fallen, Terry Lingard, of Outdoor Leisure, points out, from about 85,000 per year in the late Eighties to 25,000 last season; but "they are going up this year," he says, "because there's a reason to buy new ones."

The latest carving skis are sweeping away traditional designs - and buzzing up the market for boots, too. Steve Hazell saw people at the Olympia show "queuing for an hour to try on boots", and buying expensive models with custom insoles and zip-fit liners because "they no longer want to compromise on comfort". (You will not be surprised to learn that attendances on the opening weekend at Olympia, and for the duration of the earlier Birmingham show, were up by 20 per cent.)

As with holidays, so with ski equipment: "buy now while stocks last" has a ring of truth. To keep up with demand at the show, Salomon air-freighted the equivalent of a 40ft container of stock to Snow+Rock last week - they did not dare risk its being caught in the French lorry-drivers' strike. But that was part of a pre-season order; now Hazell would like to reorder many lines. In most cases he can't, because after difficult years manufacturers have reduced the amount of stock they keep - and at this time of year they have stopped production, to concentrate on next season's models.

But even in this season's seller's market, some things are readily available, and at a bargain price. In the difficult Christmas week, for example, Crystal has now dropped the prices for some holidays in Italy, France and North America on 20 December - and in ski equipment, too.

As Outdoor Leisure's Terry Lingard says, "anyone who's got stock of traditional skis will be panicking now" - so in the unlikely event that you want to buy a pair, you should be able to get a keen price. But what if the resorts where you planned to go are fully booked? Perhaps Dundret, in Arctic Sweden, could be an alternative. I'll keep you posted.



Ski bonanza: this year's rush is partly due to the strong pound  
Photograph: Bob Allen/Stockfile

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London area. (0171) 293-2222.

**CONCERNED**  
Intelligent, slim female, 35,  
seeks warm, communicative,  
professional male, to share cul-  
ture, travel, leisure, romance,  
interests conversation. NW  
area. (0171) 293-2222.

**SEEKING A FRIEND**  
Chinese female, 33, studying in  
UK, enjoys music, reading,  
films and travel, seeks profes-  
sional, honest, educated, tall,  
slim, white male, 34-40, with  
good taste, NS, for friendship.  
London area. (0171) 293-2222.

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Professional, stylish, black female,  
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**WOMEN  
SEEKING  
MEN**

**CRABBY CANCER**  
Elegantly sophisticated, caring  
female, 41, 5'7", enjoys  
socialising, sports, dining out,  
cinema, places of interest,  
country life, seeks friendly  
male, 30-35, to share life and  
romance. Hertfordshire area.  
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**SEARCHING FOR  
SOUL MATE**  
Tall, western, blond male,  
young-looking 41, medium  
build, good dress sense, loves  
everything in London, also try-  
ing to find a country and abroad  
seeks like-minded female,  
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Scottish born. (0171) 293-2222.

**QUENCH YOUR  
THIRST FOR LOVE**  
...and mine! Thoughtful, attrac-  
tive, caring, outgoing  
female, 30s, enjoys travel, leisure,  
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try life, seeks friendly male,  
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**GRADUATE WOMAN**  
Warm, friendly, mature, in-  
tellectual, financially secure, pro-  
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music, seeks similar, warm  
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Energetic, professional male,  
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offer, seeks fun-loving female,  
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**MOROCCO BOUND**  
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**ASHTON FRIENDS**  
Straight female, 33, seeks  
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shopping, conversation, laugh-  
ter & true friendship. Ashton  
area. (0171) 293-2222.

**HEARTS MAN**  
Attractive male, 40, slim,  
honest, country life, motor-  
bikes, travel and all the better  
things in life, seeks attractive,  
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Midlands area. (0171) 293-2222.

**RESULTS OF NEW ENERGY**  
Professional, slim, educated,  
Christian male, 40, own home,  
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Professional, slim, educated,  
Christian male, 40, own home,  
seeks female, 3







## THE CLASSIC HAMMOCK

Cracker-wrapped for Christmas



**£39.95**  
EACH  
BUY TWO  
GET ONE  
FREE

The Neptune Classic Hammock @ £39.95, plus Deluxe Steel Cradle @ £39.95. The Classic Hammock is made of soft cotton-drill and is 5ft x 7ft, which makes it the ideal Christmas present for everyone in the family to enjoy. It comes with a choice of hanging options, and will HANG ANYWHERE, inside or out. For a hassle-free Christmas, take advantage of our gift-wrapping service which will transform the hammock into a beautiful GIANT SIZED CRACKER. Call us on 01249 783252 or post the coupon for our FREE catalogue.

AS FEATURED IN:  
BBC  
Gardens World  
The Mail on Sunday  
The Telegraph  
The Times

Neptune, Sevington Farm, Chippinghams, Wiltshire SN14 7LD  
Tel: 01249 783252 Fax: 01249 783253

## TODAY'S JUSTOOLS OFFER

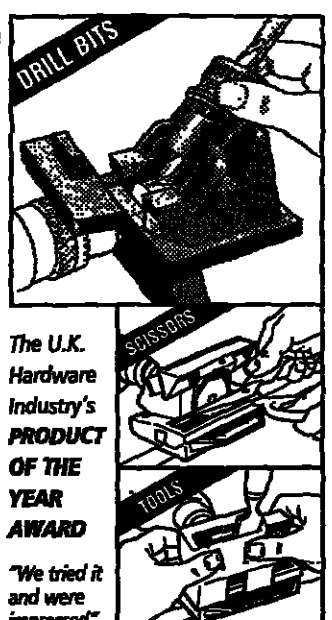
### Complete Home Sharpening System

Today's Offer is a fast, efficient and inexpensive method of honing sharp-as-new edges on blunt, ineffective drill bits, hand tools, knives and scissors. Safety tested and approved by BS1 England and TUV Germany, this British made precision engineered system achieved a maximum 5 star rating from Practical Householder.

Using any electric drill as the power source, its water-cooled operation eliminates blade edge overheating and preserves the temper of the steel. The carefully designed tool holders and jigs ensure that tools being sharpened are held against the grinding wheels at precisely the correct angles. Use to sharpen HSS drill bits up to 1/2" diameter, masonry hammer and SDS - Plus bits, centre punch, wood chisels, plane blades, pointed & bladed hand tools, left or right handed scissors, all types of knives.

At Today's Offer price of £29.95 + £2.95 p.p.h. this Complete Home Sharpening System offers exceptional value and is a must for all gift lists.

Orders received by DECEMBER 13th guaranteed despatch in time for Xmas. If you are not fully satisfied, please return within 14 days for a full refund.



### AN IDEAL GIFT

Post coupon for JUSTOOLS (Dept 1046)  
88 Station Rd, Burton Latimer, Northants NN15 5WV

Please send me the Complete Home Sharpening System. I enclose Cheques/P.O.s for £\_\_\_\_\_ payable to Justools or debit my MASTERCARD or VISA card.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Post Code \_\_\_\_\_

Justools (Dept 1046), 88 Station Rd, Burton Latimer, Northants NN15 5WV  
(01536) 451197 Fax: (01536) 451198  
Branches at: 200 High St, Exeter EX1 1AA, Devon; 100 High St, Exeter EX1 1AA, Devon; 100 High St, Exeter EX1 1AA, Devon.

## Christmas without cruelty fayre

10am-5pm  
Sunday 30 November

Original cruelty free, ethically produced Christmas gifts sold in aid of charities, campaign groups and by ethical traders

Kensington Town Hall  
Hornton Street  
London W8

High Street Kensington tube  
admission £1  
Children under 11 free  
Vegetarian cafe  
Animal Aid 01732 364546

**THE EuroCave**  
NO CELLAR? NO PROBLEM!  
STORING BETWEEN 50 AND 500 BOTTLES, OUR CONSERVATION CABINETS REPRODUCE THE FIVE QUALITIES OF A TRADITIONAL WINE CELLAR.

CONSTANT TEMPERATURE  
APPROPRIATE HUMIDITY  
TOTAL EXCLUSION  
OF UNWANTED ODOURS  
FREEDOM FROM ALL  
VIBRATION  
DARKNESS

FOR A CATALOGUE  
SOWSOW FOOD  
MACHINERY  
CO LTD  
TEL: 0800 7319217

## TOP QUALITY ADULT PARTY CRACKERS

VERY NAUGHTY & SAUCY  
Great fun for any Adult Party or Celebration!!

FOR BIRTHDAY, XMAS, NEW YEAR, HEN, Stag, Office, Party, Drinks Etc. SEXY FUN TO MAKE YOUR PARTY GO WITH A BANG!!!  
07000 272253  
OR WRITE TO:  
ADULT PARTY CRACKER CO.  
DEPT D 644, PO BOX 999,  
WORTHING BN14 8FZ

## WEATHERVANE FOR XMAS?

■ Craftsmen made in U.K.  
■ All steel, Super Quality  
■ 3 Sizes available  
■ 300 designs approx  
■ Prices from £29.99

Further details/brochure: Webbs Distribution Ltd.  
Unit 2, 15 Station Rd, Knebworth, Herts SG3 6AP  
Tel: 01438 814620 (24hrs) Fax: 01438 815047  
Comprehensive brochure available



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TEL: 0800 7319217

## SILK LINGERIE

Will make your own underwear as good as new. Single items, tops, bras, briefs, etc. Very reasonable prices. Repairs, alterations. Nationwide service.

Full details from:  
C.F.S. Burbs Cottage,  
Woburn, Bedfordshire,  
MK14 0BN  
or phone:  
01463 700424

## LADIES CHANGE YOUR MAN FOR CHRISTMAS!

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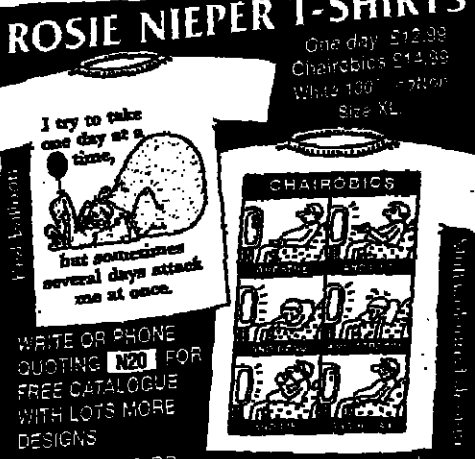
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Congratulations also to all Semi-Finalists

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# 13/RURAL

## How green was my mountain – or soon will be

The farm is so wild, no one even knows how big it is, but David Henry has great hopes for his new home on Green Mountain in Ascension Island. Duff Hart-Davis meets a modern pioneer.

None but the most intrepid would take on a 10-year lease of Green Mountain Farm, wrapped round the summit of the volcano that is Ascension Island in the South Atlantic. Yet David Henry, a stalwart 37-year-old born in London of St Helenian and Irish parents, has done that very thing.

Only those who know Ascension can fully grasp the size of his project, for the farm – clinging to precipitous slopes between 2,000ft and 3,000ft above sea level, at the top of 19 tortuous hairpin bends – has never been fully under control, and has lain abandoned for years.

To start at the beginning: in 1817 the island was occupied by the Royal Navy to prevent the French from using it as a base for rescuing Napoleon, incarcerated on St Helena, 700 miles to the south east. Ascension was then a forbidding place, with rust-red volcanic cones rising from deserts of tumbled black lava, and no plant life except near the top of the highest peak, which sailors naturally called Green Mountain.

For the next century the island remained a naval base, run by the Royal Marines who, as a sideline, made immense efforts to cultivate part of the mountain to provide fresh food. Then, as now, two distinct climates prevailed. Down on the lava plains the temperature was in the high 80s all year round, with a south-east trade wind blustering over the lava. High up, the air was far cooler, and the mountain caught the moisture of passing clouds.

Severe handicaps limited agricultural progress. One was the sparse rainfall, which some experts believed could be increased if "the direction of the electricity were reversed" by convicts whirling chains on the summit. Another snag was that with scarcely any native plants or animals there were no natural controls, and one imported species after another ran amok.

Rats had already come ashore from wrecked ships, and were living off seabirds. To suppress them, the Marines brought in cats, but these soon escaped and went wild, so the Navy imported dogs to hunt them down. Goats, sheep, pigs, and donkeys also made off into the lava deserts.

Up on the mountain, the Marines established a little farm. Many imported plants and trees died; others rampaged, and plagues of insects and mice ravaged garden crops. From their comfortable base in London,

4,000 miles away, the Lords of the Admiralty directed the deployment of corrective measures: mynah birds, starlings, rooks, pheasants, partridges, ducks and hedgehogs were sent out to eat the insects, and barn owls to catch the rats and mice.

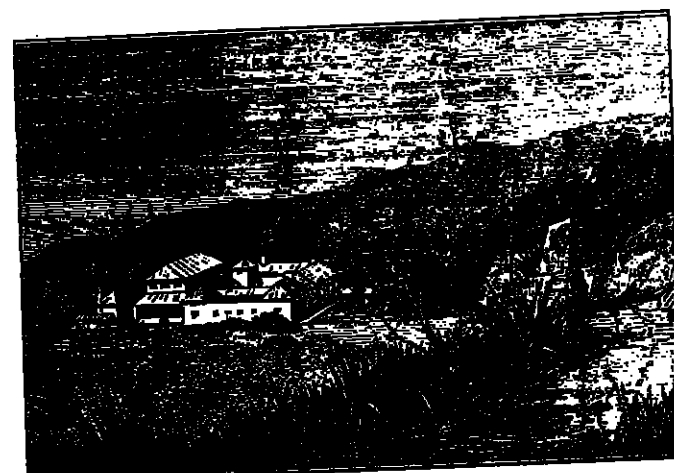
Professional gardeners were driven to despair by repeated setbacks – and none more pitifully than Joseph Sparring, who in 1887 had to be taken away "in a condition of quiet dementia", suffering from what was described as "formication": he believed that "not only his bed but his whole house was swarming with ants".

When the Marines left the island in 1922, the farm was maintained after a fashion by their successors, the Eastern Telegraph Company, forerunners of Cable & Wireless, but in the past few years it has gone sadly downhill. Enter David Henry, a carpenter by trade, but now also a farmer, who in the

several buildings constructed by the Marines. Some indication of the farm's wildness is given by the fact that nobody knows how big it is. David estimates it as between 10,000 and 20,000 acres, but there is only one half-acre patch that could reasonably be called flat, and perhaps 50 acres that could be brought into use for market gardening, "if I work really hard".

That is what he proposes. He is now in St Helena, but later this month will bring his fiancée Melanie Timm, a veterinary nurse and livestock officer, to live on Green Mountain for the foreseeable future.

The challenge, in which he rejoices, is to sort out the astonishing ecological jumble left behind by the Marines and their successors. Ginger, brambles, aloes, bamboo, acacia, casuarinas, wild raspberries, all grow together. Already he has discovered an overgrown coffee plantation that can



Ascension Island, from the 'Illustrated London News', 28 February, 1874

spring of 1982 went out for a holiday to St Helena, and was marooned there for seven months because the ship that serves the island was commandeered for the Falklands war. As St Helena has no airfield, the only way he could return home was by hitching a lift on a Danish vessel, which called at Ascension.

That visit gave him his first sight of Green Mountain. He later made many return visits to St Helena and on his way home he several times called at Ascension, taking advantage of the fact that RAF Tristars regularly pass through on their way to and from the Falklands garrison.

Then, earlier this year, the authorities decided to advertise Green Mountain farm for let, and David was the successful applicant. His only rent is a commitment to maintain the farm as a recreational area for the temporary residents who live and work down below. (These include British and American personnel, and a considerable staff of workers from St Helena, known to all as "saints".)

His tenancy agreement encompasses all the land more than 1,900ft above sea level, and with it

he brought back to fruitful life. A flock of 1,800 sheep, loose on the mountain, will have to be corralled, culled, and rejuvenated by introducing pedigree rams. Down below, wild donkeys still roam the lava, living largely on cardboard and hats blown off unwary islanders by the trade winds.

One factor in David's favour is that on the mountain rainfall has definitely increased, apparently in response to the spread of trees and shrubs. Now vegetable seeds leap up within three or four days – but so also do weeds.

The new incumbent has ambitious plans for supplying not only the plain-dwellers and the island ship on its way up and down the South Atlantic, but also the "saints" who work in the Falklands garrison, and would welcome regular deliveries of pumpkins, yams and sweet potatoes. He even has his eye on markets in London. With the RAF air-bridge in place, with fax, telephone and soon (he hopes) the Internet connected to his eye in mid-ocean, he could perhaps establish a mail-order business, to give customers "direct access to what is probably the cleanest farm in the world".

Photograph David Aubrey/TPL

## NATURE NOTE

The slender hawks which you see hovering over motorway verges are kestrels, drawn to those raucous places by the mice and voles living in the grass beside the road. The birds themselves normally make little noise, except when nesting, then their cry is a shrill, insistent whistle – kee, kee, kee.

Biking up a lane between fields the other day, I was surprised to hear the sound coming from close at hand. The only tree nearby was a stunted ash, standing beside a stone wall; and, with the branches already bare, I could see there was no hawk in it, but when I got off the bike and looked over the wall, I immediately spotted brown feathers barred with black. There were two kestrels, on the ground, feuding beak to beak. The instant they saw me, they were off – but they left no prey on the ground, and no clue as to what the argument had been about.

Duff Hart-Davis

## A simple fisherman? There's no such thing

Jan Mackinnon is an international businessman – a fisherman off the west coast of the Scottish Highlands. Hamish Scott observes a day in the life of a hunter grappling with the elements ... and global currency fluctuations.

Standing on the deck of Jan Mackinnon's fishing boat as we pull out from the harbour at Arisaig, it is easy to appreciate why the west Highlands have always been a place apart. From half a mile offshore, the houses of the village and the shoreline crofts are dwarfed by barren mountains that recede into an infinity of wilderness.

It was the beauty of this awe-inspiring landscape that attracted Jan to the Rough Bounds of Inverness-shire 12 years ago, for Arisaig, like any west coast village, has amongst its population a high proportion of "incomers" seeking a new start in life far from all the usual pressures of the modern world.

But scenery alone does not provide a living, and work is hard to find in such communities. The land is far too poor for cultivation; the tourist season is finished by October; and with the closest town an hour's drive along a narrow, winding road, few other options are available. For Jan, as for many of Arisaig's inhabitants, the only opportunities lie out to sea.

On a perfect autumn morning there are half-a-dozen boats beside our own navigating the North Channel. There are divers after razor-fish and scallops, dinghies heading for the coves where whelks and oysters may be found, launches like our own piled high with prawn and lobster creels. The *plais de fruits de mer* on sale in some of Europe's finest restaurants feature seafood caught by this flotilla of small, ramshackle craft.

In the wheelhouse Jan checks the echosounder as he brews a pot of tea. "It's man the hunter off to work," he says with a grin, "and there's no hiding from the boss."

In the summer, Jan's favoured quarry was prawns. At £30 a stone, the price is good and steady, but with recent catches proving to be disappointing, Jan has decided that the breeding grounds now need a season of respite to allow stocks to recover. Also, in the autumn months the big clam-dredgers are coming out in force, scouring the deeper sea-bed day and night. They will not even notice if they also dredge a "fleet" of Jan's creels, worth £1,000, so we're off to move the creels into safer inshore waters.

He already has several fleets around the rocks where velvet crabs are found. The Spaniards are particularly partial to the little velvet crab. It's just the right size for *tapas*.

Our first fleet is moored off Camusdarach. We're looking at a sweep of empty sand dunes, with the jagged peaks of Knoydart in the distance, as the first of 50 creels is winched into the boat. Half a dozen velvet crabs fall into the crate, red eyes furiously glistening, claws waving in defiance. Some edible brown crabs are thrown back, too small to be landed. Also a small octopus, squirting ink as its tentacles pump down towards the safety of the sea-bed. "Look at this," says Jan, holding up a silvery wrasse the size of his thumb. "We used to get £2.50 each for these. Fish farms bought them to eat lice off salmon when the chemicals they used were banned. Now they're back on chemicals under some new name, and the fish aren't worth a penny." He tosses it back into the sea.

And so the hunt goes on. From Luinga Mhor to Loch nan Uamh, winching creels, sorting through the catch and shooting back the fleets into new positions. The tide is turning and the small boat pitches in a heavy swell. Not many days are as fine as this in the west Highlands. The only weather that will keep Jan at home is when stepping out of doors is like falling from a boat and drowning on the doorstep. Otherwise he goes to work, cursing the conditions and trying not to think too hard of the risks.

By the time the sun is setting over Rhum, we've gathered up the last of the prawn creels and repositioned them

where Jan's instinct and the echosounder suggest that velvet crabs may be found. Back in the bay of Arisaig, the day's catch must be sorted. Just a dozen giant prawns, weighing up to half-a-pound apiece. Perhaps there will be more around in spring, but no one can be certain. For the moment there are velvet crabs, 200kg to be transferred into sacks and hung on buoys in readiness for the truck that will transport them down to Barcelona in aerated vats of seawater. By the weekend they'll be *tapas* on the menu of some pavement café.

To the small group of French cyclists watching from the quay, Jan might appear to be a simple local fisherman with no concerns beyond the beautiful west-coast horizon, rather than a businessman working in an international market. But in order to survive he must keep an eye on fluctuating currencies and ever-changing European regulations – and he must even keep abreast of current eating fads. Last month he went down to London to check out the *moules frites* in Belgo, for he's thinking of diversifying into mussel farms.

Few businessmen, however, are subject to the same elemental forces that affect the daily life of Arisaig. As Jan hoses down his boat there's a gale warning on the radio. He looks up briefly when the Hebrides are mentioned. "Sometimes," he admits, "I do dream about a bank job, with a cut-price mortgage and a pension."

## THE INDEPENDENT

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## The Gospel according to Pru



Inside a huge, shiny kitchen with banks of ovens, hobs and worktops, 32 novices don aprons and start to study passages from their Bibles. Sally Staples joins a cookery class.

The text in question is from Leith's "Cookery Bible", written by Prue Leith and the school's principal, Caroline Waldegrave. It is given to each student on enrolment. Tonight is the sixth out of 10 lessons and on the menu is prawn pilau and chocolate profiteroles.

Most of the students have come straight from work, as the session starts at 6.30pm, and several have brought bottles of wine with them. Licensing laws and the need to keep a clear head mean that the rookie cooks may drink only two small glasses.

No one would feel out of place on this course. There are bankers, solicitors, students, housewives and secretaries, and the age range is 18 to retirement. What they all have in common are an interest in cooking and a general lack of expertise.

The course takes nothing for granted. The proper way to boil an egg and peel and dice an onion are given the same attention as the trickier business of preparing the choux pastry for the profiteroles. Naturally, there are no food mixers in this kitchen; beating eggs and whipping cream are done by hand.

Before the action begins, teacher Jacqui Thomas runs through the preparations for the menu and advises on timing. In front of each student the exact ingredients have been weighed out in advance. All they have to do is make the dishes and then take them home to eat for supper.

Victoria Shaw, a solicitor, has high praise for the course because it includes all the ingredients, and the teaching ratio is one to eight. "I also find coming here after work helps me to unwind," she says. "And the great thing is being able to eat what you have made. The recipes are for two people, so I usually ask a friend round afterwards."

Colin Stanley, a widower, works as an environmental health consultant. His son had already done the Leith course and he was so impressed by the results that he decided to give it a try. "I'm generally better at eating than at cooking, but I've been surprised at the things we've done. Last week we made lemon curd. I'm not a lemon curd man, but this tasted nothing like the sort you buy in the shops. It was

an elixir. The time before that we cooked pork in a marseila sauce. It was delicious. Before this, my only brush with cooking was an Army cadet course."

As the students chop and dice and bake, Jacqui and her colleague Claire Macdonald move round to offer tips: a circle of grease-proof paper over onions frying in butter helps keep their colour, and allows them to soften without burning; a delicious fish stock can be made from prawn shells heated in water and wine.

Susan Oldfield, who works as a PA, has come on the course because she thinks it is high time she learned to cook. "I have been married for three years and I've got a dinner service I never use because I can't cook properly," she says. "Coming here is a revelation."

Several young women are here because they knew only two recipes which they used for every dinner party, and wanted to show off some new discoveries to their friends.

Hannah Coleman, who works in banking, is getting married next year. "I felt I ought to know how to cook for my husband," she says. "I like experimenting, but I thought I should know the basics. Whenever I have tried to follow a recipe it has never told me how to get the sauce to look the way it did in the picture. This course has made me feel a lot more confident."

Charlie Bellhouse, 18, is the youngest of the cooks. In his gap year between school and university he signed up for the course to help him land a job working in a sking chalet. "I was completely ignorant when I came," he said. "I couldn't fry an egg, and I didn't know what they meant by seasoning. But everyone has been so helpful."

As the evening progresses the cooks get busier, but there is a friendly, relaxed atmosphere. No one appears to have a disaster. The choux pastry cases come out of the oven looking highly professional. The pilau rice bubbles away comfortably as it cooks in the fish stock. Some cooks have problems whipping the cream to exactly the right consistency, but most manage.

And at the end of the session everyone washes up the utensils, bowls and plates they have used - which the women all agreed was excellent training for the men.

The beginners' course at Leith's School of Food and Wine, 21 St Albans Grove, London W8 5BP, runs for 10 three-hour sessions and costs £350, inclusive of ingredients. For details, call 0171-229 0177.

## GAMES

### BAWN O'BEIRNE RANELAGH DON'T JUNK IT - USE IT

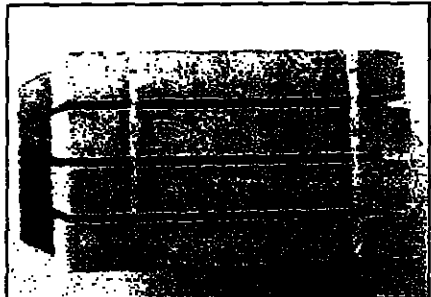
The next time you go to a Swedish lifestyle store and wonder whether to buy one of those elegant wooden knife racks, then decide not to because you don't need a knife rack, why not go home and make one yourself? There is little in life quite so satisfying as making something that you have just saved money by not buying because you didn't need it in the first place.

1. Cut four pieces of wood long and deep enough for your longest and deepest knives. Or 3cm by 4.2 cm, if that makes more sense. (The wood may be found in any good shop.)

2. Glue them to a piece of plywood or MDF. Leave enough space between the pieces to slide the knives in. (A knitting needle or folded cardboard will act well as a spacer.)

3. Now cut around the plywood, leaving a small lip at the handle end.

4. Turn the rack over and screw screws



into the top and bottom of each piece of wood. (If you really want to be fancy, use mirror screws which will then act as feet for the rack to stand on.)

5. Take two lengths of thin moulding and panel pins and tack the moulding across the top of the rack. This stops heavy-handed knives from flipping out.

## FACTS OF THE WEEK WILLIAM HARTSTON

I have been intrigued this week by an unpretentious little book from *The Economist* entitled "Pocket World in Figures". With pages about 19cm high by 9cm wide, it really will fit into the average pocket. It contains all the stuff you would expect to find in such a book: populations, GDPs, principal exports, imports, exchange rates and energy consumption for every country, but also includes nearly 100 slim pages of tables ranging from the countries with the highest divorce rates to those who spend the most on recorded music.

Here are just a few of the things I have learnt:

The country with the highest rate of serious assaults per head of population is Swaziland.

Belgium generates more nitrous oxide per head of population than anywhere else.

The highest fertility rate among women is to be found on the West Bank and Gaza.

The Norwegians top the league of book-buyers, spending \$137 a year per head.

Although the Czechs drink the most beer and the French the most wine, Luxemburgers imbibe most alcohol altogether.

There are 8.3 people in the average household in Gabon.

Qatar has the lowest marriage rate in the world.

Guatemala and Nicaragua share the lowest divorce rate.

There are 197.7 men per 100 women in Qatar.

There are 85.1 men per 100 women in Latvia.

## PANDORA MELLY GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Mary Killen (won't give her age), writer, journalist, social commentator.

I'm no good at games. In fact, my co-ordination is so bad that walking along the pavement I'll often collide with other pedestrians. Maybe I've got some condition. But to carry on, table-tennis is the only game I'm any good at, and I quite like the noise of whatever the ball's made of smacking into the table.

My sister and I used to play in our garage in the north of Ireland, and I suppose I developed my skills. Perhaps it's like riding a bicycle - you never forget how to do it.

I have played with Craig Brown at his house in Suffolk, and because he's a giant baby, the whole place is a pleasure dome. There are things to do in every room: children's football and also a ping-pong table.

Anyway, I hadn't played for some time, and when Craig said: "Do you want a game?" I said, "I'm hopeless, because I'd forgotten that I was ever any good at it. At

actual tennis I can't even return one ball.

So Craig flicked a ball down the middle, and I found myself flicking it back. I was able to lean over and hit the ball so that it just toppled down again, and sprang out of Craig's reach in a tricky way - as if I was possessed by a table-tennis ghost or something like that.

To my absolute amazement, the score was 21-4. Normally I present myself as not competitive, but I was absolutely ecstatic and this horrible new character came over me, which I crowed and shouted "Ha!!!"

But the punch-line of the story is, when we changed ends for the second round, Craig won 21-1. It turned out that the sun was glaring in your eyes at that end of the table, but the brief moment of triumph was wonderful.

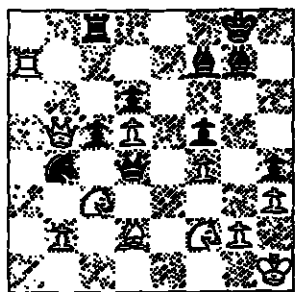
For advice on how to act at such moments, consult "Dear Mary... Your Social Dilemmas Resolved" by Mary Killen (Constable, £9.99), based on her column in *The Spectator*.

## CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON

If there is one thing above all others that characterises the play of great champions, it is how active they manage to keep their pieces. In the games of Bobby Fischer and Garry Kasparov, one constantly senses the high value they place on the initiative. Pawn weaknesses are tolerated, material is even sacrificed, all in the cause of maintaining the energy of the pieces. Even in the games of a champion such as Karpov - for whom positional correctness and control are more important than anything - one sees that his pieces may not be swagging into threatening positions, but they are always within reach of something useful to do.

That is what makes today's game so impressive. A few days ago, we saw a game in which the BCF Girls' squad snatched a draw from a lost endgame against Garry Kasparov. Here, from the same event, is the way the BCF Boys' team achieved the same result - but they did it by playing just like Kasparov himself.

Moving from a King's Indian Defence into a Benoni - both Kasparov favourites - they found an interesting idea in 9...Bd7? to tempt a4, giving the b4 square to the black knight. Its arrival there made 13...h6 possible, since 14.Bxb6 Bxb6 15.Qxb6



allows Nc2+.

Black fought for the initiative with 20...f5, but it was their 35...Qd4! that was most striking. White was allowed a combination that left him a pawn ahead, but 41...Nxd5! neatly forced a perpetual check from the queen on e1 and g3.

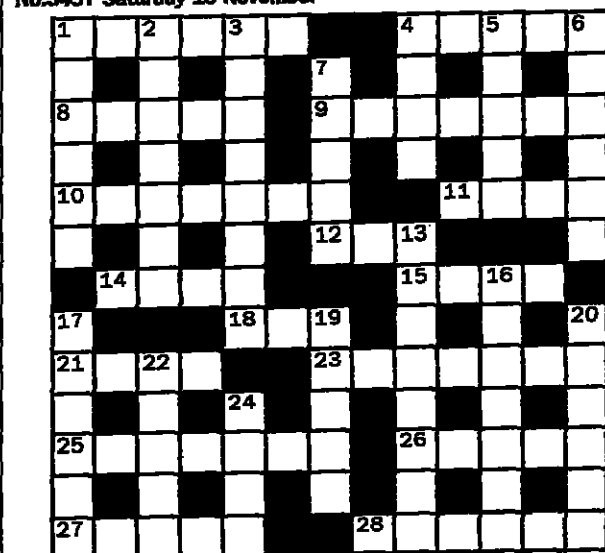
White: Garry Kasparov

Black: BCF Boys

1 d4 Nf6 23 exf5 gxf5  
2 c4 g6 24 Qd1 b4  
3 Nc3 Bg7 25 Bb5 Nxb5  
4 e4 d6 26 Qxb5+ Kg8  
5 f3 0-0 27 Bd2 Rxe1  
6 Bg5 c5 28 Rxe1 Qd8  
7 d5 e6 29 axb5 axb5  
8 Qd2 exd5 30 Ral Qf6  
9 cxd5 Bd7 31 Ra7 Be8  
10 a4 Na6 32 Qe2 Bf7  
11 Nge2 Nb4 33 Qxb5 Qd4  
12 Ng3 Re8 34 Rxd7 Kd7  
13 Be2 h6 35 Qd7+ Kg6  
14 Be3 Nh7 36 Qc6+ Bf6  
15 0-0 h5 37 Qxc8 Qx2  
16 Rael Re8 38 Qg8+ Bg7  
17 Nh1 Qa5 39 Qe6+ Bf6  
18 Nf2 a6 40 Nc2 Ng7  
19 b3 Kh8 41 Bc3 Nxd5  
20 f4 f5 42 Qxd5 Bxc3  
21 Kh1 Nf6 43 Nxc3 Qel+  
22 Bf3 b5 draw

## CONCISE CROSSWORD

No.3457 Saturday 15 November



ACROSS

1 Delight (6)  
4 Wound marks (5)  
8 Sensational (5)  
9 Large house (7)  
10 Porridge ingredient (7)  
11 Poker stake (4)  
12 Nevertheless (3)  
14 High point (4)  
15 Precious stone (4)  
18 Obscure (3)  
21 Weapons (4)  
23 Non-professional (7)  
25 Abbey church (7)  
26 Steer (5)  
27 Compass point (5)  
28 Deadly (6)

DOWN

1 Cushion for head (6)  
2 Unpredictable (7)  
3 Made unhappy (8)  
4 Transmitt (4)  
5 Foreigner (5)  
6 Vocalist (6)  
7 Suggest (5)  
13 Percussion instrument (8)  
16 Flaw (7)  
17 Fish (6)  
19 Wed (5)  
20 Distressing experience (6)  
22 Underground worker (5)  
24 Engrave using acid (4)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

ACROSS: 1 Gnaws, 4 Trill (Nostril), 10 Adverse, 11 Libel, 12 Cor-  
gi, 13 Decorum, 15 Onyx, 17 Spare, 19 Isaac, 22 Watt, 25 Corsets, 27  
Enter, 29 Rough, 30 Omnibus, 31 Start, 32 Smirk, DOWN: 2 Never,  
3 Warrior, 5 Relic, 6 Liberia, 7 Watch, 8 Ready, 9 Plume, 14 Exit, 16  
Newt, 18 Pursuit, 20 Sternum, 21 Scorn, 23 Ascot, 24 Wrist, 26 Ether,  
28 Tiber.

## BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

East-West game; dealer South

North  
♠A 10 7 3  
♥Q 6 4  
♦10 4  
♣K Q 6 3  
West  
♠2  
♥K 10 9 5 3  
♦2  
♣A J 10 9 5 4  
East  
♠K 8 4  
♥J 8  
♦A J 9 7 6  
♣8 7 2  
South  
♠Q J 9 6 5  
♥A 7 2  
♦K Q 8 5 3  
♣none

West had a difficult lead to find at trick three on this deal. There was a solution to his problem, but even seeing all four hands the winning defence is not obvious. South had opened One Spade and, eschewing such modern ideas as a Michaels Cue-bid, West overcalled with Two Clubs.

## SCULPTURE PUZZLE PUZZLE

A few weeks ago, we set the task of creating an appropriate anagram of "Darth Vader Sculpture Puzzle". Here are some of the more beguiling entries: Vlad sure captured HRT (Helen Martin); Lecturers hard up - TV ad (R.W.Cragg, who also came up with the medicinal: Raptured? Drs have talk); Depraved cult art rush (which C. Rumble thought neatly described the competition); VCR has pale dud turret (D.M.Howie, who also produced: Starlet carved up

Stretching slightly, North raised to Four Spades and, although both East and West might have been tempted to contest, they were deterred by the vulnerability.

West led ♠2 against Four Spades; East took his ace and returned ♠J for his partner to ruff South's queen. So far, so good, but what now? A heart at this point would give declarer two tricks in the suit and dummy's third heart would go away on the king of diamonds later on.

In practice, West led his ♠A, but South ruffed and was able to dispose of his losing hearts on dummy's clubs.

It would have been a difficult play to find at the table, but now you have all the clues. If both ♠A and any heart fall, what is left? Yes, West can defeat the contract by leading ♠J at this point. Declarer gets one discard from hand but still has a spade and a heart to lose.

Hurd; Ruler had used PVC tart (Simon Pressey); Crude rat had vet slurp (Lynne Clark); Perv had cultured arts (Sandra Horn); Prude TV star had lucre (Arthur Clark); turt spur reached lav (Jonathan White); Hard-up reds cut travel (Mrs F.M.Agassiz); V. ruptured cathedrals (John Kelly). But the one we liked best was: "Cult art served up hard", which wins Donald Hurd of Newton Abbot a Darth Vader Sculpture Puzzle from The Really Useful Games Company.

## BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY

I have written before of the excellent work that BIBA (British Isles Backgammon Association) is doing for the game in this country. By organising tournaments with entry fees that all players can afford it provides something which very few other countries have - amateur tournaments where anyone can come along and play, irrespective of their level of skill. Under the leadership of Michael Crane BIBA continues to go from strength to strength, and now boasts some 700 members, with well over 100 regularly entering their tournaments.

The schedule of events for 1998 has just been published with more tournaments than ever before. The first of these will be held from 2-4 January at the Stakis Brighton Metropole Hotel and features the added attraction of two two-hour seminars from Paul Magriel, former world champion and author of the definitive book *Backgammon*.

Five years ago I was lucky enough to have the benefit of some private lessons with Paul. His understanding of the game and his ability to pass on that knowledge to others are rare qualities and I certainly benefitted significantly from those sessions. Most of us learn haphazardly, the majority of our learning coming through playing. If you consistently play with the same group of people your playing strength is unlikely to improve very much. Studying books is a marked improvement because it provides structure to the learning experience. Even better than studying books is to have concepts, strategies and tactics explained to you by someone who really understands what they are talking about and can communicate clearly. Half a dozen one-hour lessons can radically improve anyone's playing strength.

Seminars by top players have become very popular at leading US events and it is good to see that feature now being included in BIBA tournaments. I would recommend to anyone who really wants to improve their play and understanding of the game to start the New Year with a visit to Brighton. Paul Magriel will provide excellent value for money and his seminars, in conjunction with what promises to be an exciting tournament, will be just the way to recover from those New Year hangovers! I will certainly be there.

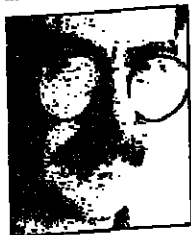
Full details of BIBA and the tournaments from: Michael Crane, BIBA, 2, Redbourne Drive, Lincoln, LN2 2HG. Tel: 01522-546993.







## When gold medallist Tom McKean was left feeling as naked as a couple of hotel guests



MIKE ROWBOTTOM

ON THE TORONTO SKYDOME LIFT

They were at it again in the Toronto SkyDome recently. Ever since an enamoured couple availed themselves of the facilities in one of the stadium's inward looking hotel rooms four years ago - temporarily diverting the interest of several thousand Toronto Blue Jays fans and a number of the players - the management had issued warnings.

Be aware, they say, that if you book certain rooms you will be on public view unless you close the curtains. Even the dimmest of exhibitionists couldn't fail to see the possibilities of that scenario: earlier this year another goggle-eyed gathering got the benefit of some heaving flesh.

It can't be long before the cameras are picking up discreet

sponsorship logos on the buttocks.

What once was extraordinary has become almost routine. Seen one pair of SkyDome bonkers, seen them all. No one, however, is likely to match Tom McKean's performance in the 1993 World Indoor Athletics Championships.

All his clothes remained on: he just felt naked.

Tom McKean. He was an athlete of great talents, but unfortunately for him, one was for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Even his arrival on the British middle-distance scene was compounded by a hint of misjudgement when he had to settle for silver at the 1986 European Championships

after being beaten on his blind side by Seb Coe - "This little shit" as McKean referred to him only half humorously when he spoke to the television people at track-side.

A year later the Glaswegian, who had spent his early years as a labourer, was given a working over by the tabloids, who labelled him McFlopp after his tactically inept display in the World Championship final.

There was more of the same for this genial man in 1991, when, seemingly assured of the second qualifying place in the opening round of the World Championships, he slowed to a virtual standstill - "Save it, Tommy, save it!" - and was put out by another runner who beat him to the line. "Oh Christ! Oh no!"

Let's be fair here. Tommy sometimes got it right. In 1990 he won the European 800 metres titles both indoors and out. And in 1993 within the vast enclosure of the SkyDome, he became world indoor champion.

It was to be his last major victory, but he will never be able to look back upon it with untrammelled joy.

I had forgotten about what happened in the aftermath of that race until I revisited the SkyDome earlier this year for the anticlimatic spring challenge between Donovan Bailey and Michael Johnson.

To travel between the floor of the arena and the viewing galleries above you have to take the lift. And as I waited with growing impatience to

go down and see what either man had to say for himself afterwards, I remembered how I had suffered similar frustration during my visit in 1993.

The earth is round. Swallows migrate. And the Toronto SkyDome lifts are desperately, inexplicably slow.

It so happened that I was sharing my phone four years ago with an esteemed colleague from Glasgow's *Herald* newspaper. He, not surprisingly, had established a good working relationship with his city's foremost international athlete. So when McKean wanted to pass on the good news of his win to his coach and family back home, it seemed only natural that he should pop up to the press box to avail himself of the facility.

I tried not to eavesdrop as he sat beside me. No, I didn't. He was clearly emotional as he talked to his wife. "Aye... it's great... aye... is she there? Put her on..."

My friend's voice intruded briefly. "Tom... I think they're getting ready for the ceremony..."

He acknowledged the information, and bent his head once more to the phone.

Now he was speaking with quiet intensity to his coach, Tommy Boyle. "Aye... I know... but I didn't, did I?"

My friend called out again. "Tom." McKean nodded and continued.

"Aye... thank you... thanks... thank you for everything."

There was clearly activity

below involving men in blazers and shapely young medal bearers.

"Tom! Tom! You've got to go now! Look!"

Television caught the drama well. As the national anthem boomed out, the Union flag rose over a podium with a significant absence. Only when the final bars were edging through the SkyDome did a pale, track-suited figure scamper into the arena. "Oh Christ! Oh no!"

I looked at the phone in front of me - inert, innocent. There would have been a lung-bursting spring along the brightly lit, carpet-tiled corridor. Then the lift. The doors. The static indicator. The doors. It didn't bear thinking about.

## Robo-bowler delivers the Waqar factor

Technology-free for much of its 250-year-old history, cricket has nevertheless embraced bowling machines for the last 50 years.

Our Cricket Correspondent disturbs the mothballs and dons his old batting gear to take on Merlin - the latest gizmo that attempts to make bowlers redundant.

Low on practice and high on foolhardiness, it was with some trepidation that I went to face Merlin in the indoor nets at the Middlesex Cricket Academy in Finchley. If the name does not strike quite the same chord of fear as Michael Holding or Malcolm Marshall, its connections with sorcery and a reputed top speed of 114mph still made my blood run cool.

If this seems a tad melodramatic, let me explain. The last time I faced a bowling machine, in Adelaide some 15 years ago, it nearly broke my arm. But that was not exactly the machine's fault: the England coach, Norman Gifford, in trying to simulate the collective ire of Dennis Lillee, Jeff Thomson and Geoff Lawson, had set it to bowl houncers around 100 mph, and one simply didn't get up as much as I'd expected. I've had something of an aversion to them ever since.

Naturally, with technology overtaking itself every few weeks or so, improvements are bound to have been made, even in the field of bowling machines. Mind you, it was not so long ago that such machines were based on those crude catapults once used to sack walled cities in medieval times, and several batsmen came close to decapitation.

Of course, Merlin, despite being in the prototype stage, is not nearly so gauche. Imagine, then, a fairly mobile - the production model will be lighter - 8ft tall fridge-freezer on wheels, with a large porthole cut into the uppermost quarter of one side.

It is from this porthole that the ball, a hard dimpled plastic one, suddenly appears, sped on its 22-yard

voyage towards the batsman by four rapidly rotating polythene wheels. According to its inventor, Henry Pryor, it is this four-wheel head that gives Merlin its clear superiority over the current manual two-wheel machines which came to cricket via baseball.

Housed beneath the porthole are the guts of the beast, a complex system of motors, hydraulics and computer modules that can drive and alter the speeds of the four wheels in relation to one another. This allows subtle as well as large variations in speed, length and type of delivery simply at the touch of a button. If only talented hotheads like Dominic Cork were as easy to handle.

But if Cork's forte a few seasons ago was to swing the ball by using the shine and the angle of the seam, Merlin's achieves movement through the air by means of swerve. This is caused by side spin, much like a hooked or sliced golf shot. Given that it can also cut and spin the ball at will, too, Merlin is clearly something of an *überbowler*.

BY DEREK PRINGLE

The science bit over, it is on to the man versus machine contest that most of the 30-or-so-strong crowd - mainly coaches - have come to see. Occupying main billing is that Middlesex and England stalwart, Mike Gatting. First, though, your correspondent has, by dint of turning up early, the fortune to have a bat before the artificial surface and balls warm up and become less predictable.

With an amber light to tell you that the ball is loaded, and a green light to warn you it is on its way in one second's time, an early sighting is impossible and even a gentle 50mph delivery seems to be upon you before you can move.

Anticipating your opponent's actions is a vital part of every sport, and this is where the machine falls down in its bid to be human. Against Merlin, it is difficult to select a shot

unless the operator tells you what the ball is about to do, which rather defeats the object of most practice.

That aside, the machine is impressively consistent and metro-nomically accurate. Indeed it is so mean-spirited, that the entrepreneurs behind it, Amar Sharma and John Hardy of Vanmatic, a company that produces automatic gearbox parts, should have contemplated calling it "Curly" or even "Haddie".

However, once I had got used to priming my bat and feet to move on the green light, Merlin became playable. Mind you, runs were extremely hard to come by and after 60 balls faced without the merest sniff of a long hop or half volley, I was about 20-1, the wicket falling to a magnificent leg-cutter that bounced steeply and took the glove.

It proved a happier outing than the one experienced by Gatting, who apart from taking several painful blows to the famous bread basket, was Waqar-ed at least three times by vicious inswinging yorkers. Being that good can have a downside, and Merlin's presence may discourage youngsters to bowl in the nets and try to become Waqar Younis themselves.

On the plus side, Merlin's consistency would make it a marvellous coaching tool for grooving certain shots or overcoming specific technical problems, something Mike Atherton worked on in New Zealand with rewarding consequences following his dismal tour of Zimbabwe.

According to its makers, this machine really can do almost anything, with the possible exception of recreating Shane Warne's wonder-ball and sledging the batsman. It can also be operated alone by means of a foot pedal from the batsman's end.

Its other great asset, providing there is electricity, is that it never gets tired, and even at 10 grand apiece, a pair - one for each end - would solve most counties' rising wage bills by dispensing with spinners and seamers alike. With a bit of luck it could also be modified to keep the beers cold for the batsmen and fielders. Now that would be an investment worth making.



Line of fire: Derek Pringle's magic touch tests the Merlin bowling machine Photograph: Robert Hallam

### SPORT ON THE INTERNET

#### Net gain to southern hemisphere

The Rugby Football Union started its own web site last week (promoting it with the worst pun of the month, "World Wide Webb Ellis") just in time for the autumn series of internationals.

It contains a question and answer piece with Lawrence Dallaglio, profiles of England's elite players, a quiz and information on Twickenham. It is disappointing that it does not have anything on England's team for today's match against Australia but, even allowing for its newness, it still is rather a good reflection of the RFU itself.

Just as England are likely to be bested by teams from the southern hemisphere on the pitch, so in cyberspace they also come second. The official Wallabies site is bright and brash as one would expect and includes a daily diary of the tour by Andrew "The Ox" Heath. The post-mortem after last weekend's defeat by Argentina was held by - what else - a kangaroo court.

The official All Blacks site is a model of succinctness and information. It contains up-to-date news of the All Blacks' current tour, even including information of England's enforced team changes for their match against Australia, profiles of the players. (although I rather went off Carlos Spencer when I read that his favourite film is *The Lion King*, but he is a good rugby player for all that) and links to other sites.

The Springboks site has the usual mix of profiles, news and archive material. All the southern hemisphere sites have details of the recent Tri-Nations and Super 12 tournaments. Of the domestic sites, Scrum has results from all the major European club leagues and cup competitions, a daily news round-up and a promised audio link from Twickenham at the weekend. As a general site dealing with all aspects of northern hemisphere rugby union, this seems to be the best.

The Allied Dunbar Premiership has its own site for the top clubs and this contains full player stats for all the competing clubs.

Edward Abelson

#### ADDRESSES

RFU official site  
<http://www.rfu.org.uk/>  
All Blacks official site  
<http://www.allblacks.co.nz/>  
Wallabies official site  
<http://www.wallabies.co.nz/>  
Springboks official site  
<http://www.springboks.co.za/>  
Scrum  
<http://www.scrum.com/>  
Allied Dunbar Premiership  
<http://www.allieddunbar.co.uk/>

## Shaggers, love rats and gold-diggers run to ground in Happy Eater mansions



CHRIS MAUME

SPORT ON TV

It was a good thing that the makers of the *Cutting Edge* film "Footballers' Wives" (Channel 4) did not restrict themselves to the spouses of the star-crossed elite. We got Suzi Walker, wife of Spurs goalkeeper Ian, who has her own cable talk show, *Hiya!* (which surprisingly isn't a reference to where her husband's team ought to be in the league), and Sam Holdsworth, married to Love Rat Deano - Dean Holdsworth, that is - as she launched what will surely be (please God) a short and uneventful pop career.

In contrast, the grit in the programme's oyster, so to speak, was Ann Lee, wife of Jason, the striker who took so much stick from Newman and Baddiel about his pineapple hairdo (and habit of missing open goals) that his confidence was shot to pieces and he slid down the professional ladder into Nottingham Forest reserves. After Suzi Walker had shown us round her

Ongar love nest, Lee gave us a reality restorative: "I wouldn't wish it on anybody," she said of her life. She met Jason when he was playing for her father's team when she was 15, and has been a grass widow for too long to be starstruck. "I hate football," she said. "I don't know if it's because it was rammed down my throat since an early age. I think netball should be on telly, not football."

For Ian Walker, it was love at first sight. He opened page three and there was his future wife. Blind date fixed, she read the sports magazines to see what she was letting herself in for, but there was nothing about Ian - an outrage later rectified when he was named Sexiest Footballer of the Year by the Nobel Prize Committee or United Nations Security Council or someone similar.

As we see her fluffing her introductory lines to *Hiya!* (a cheap shot this, one of several

the film couldn't resist) David Hahn, her agent, trundled into view, coming across in his bilious green jacket (I once saw an identical one on the back of porn supremo David Sullivan at one of those awards dinner) like one of those ambitious but hopelessly self-deluded characters Mike Leigh is ruthless in dissecting - think Timothy Spall in *Life Is Sweet*.

Hahn had gleaned his script from the tabloid showbiz pages, and his analyses of the celebrity lifestyle were magnificently unenlightening. "On planes they might even find themselves next to royalty," he slavered, on the subject of footballers who get rich quick. In one interview sequence, shot bizarrely in a restaurant as he stuffed his face with what appeared to be chicken satay (or it might just have been a very runny kebab), he gave us the benefits of his theories of celebrity and physical attractiveness.

"If you're going to be in the

public eye you want to look good, you want to feel good," he said as satay sauce dribbled down his chin (well, almost). "If you're earning big money - this is the whole glitz - it's a whole aura around the industry. It's a case of they like to be seen in the right places and they always like to be seen with good-looking people. It's very unusual that you'd see a footballer wandering in a nightclub or wandering out in a restaurant with someone who's extremely -" there was an almost unrecordably short pause while he considered the bluntness of what he was about to say - "ugly!"

While Sam Holdsworth spoke soulfully of the "devastation" she felt when Love Rat Deano was caught with his trousers round his ankles, it was left to Ann Lee to tell it like it is. "I met a footballer, they think 'Cor, money, limelight, I'll have some of that.' And to be fair to the gold-diggers, she says

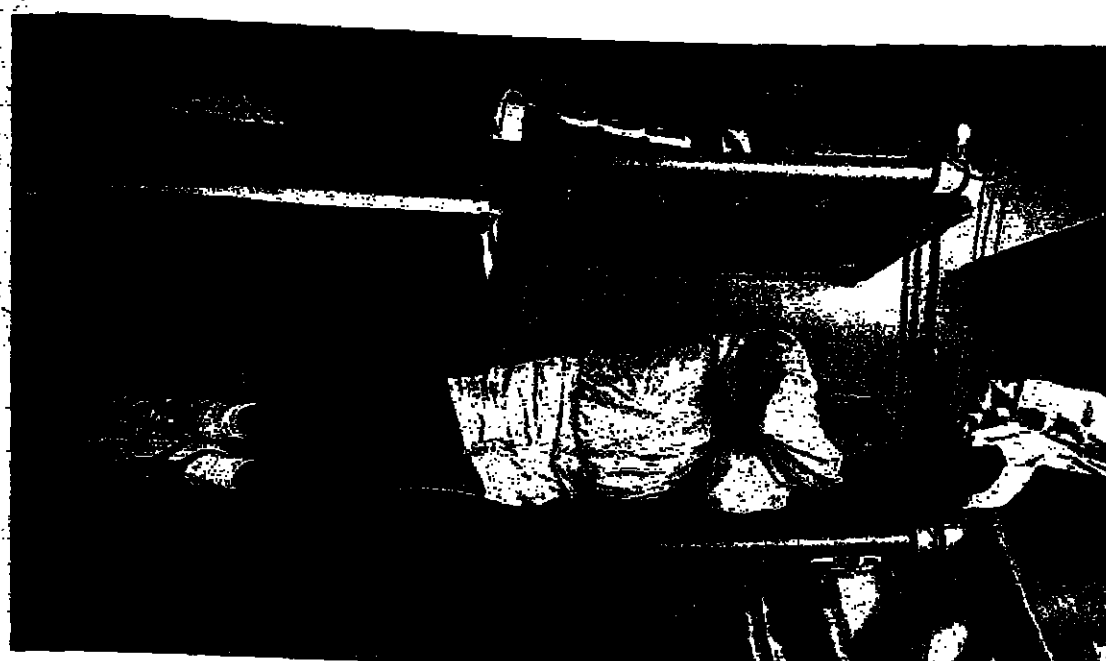
footballers are a pushover: "They'll shag anything." Interact with shots of Lee studying for her maths and English "O" levels while she waited to hear whether her husband, unwanted by Forest, signed for Watford (she doesn't want to leave Nottingham) were scenes of Walker being shown round a mock Jacobean "mansion" that for all its chandeliers and panelling had as much character as a Happy Eater, and Holdsworth's ill-advised foray into crap pop music. As she was paying the producers and agents herself (according to the programme, at least), at best her efforts were navel vanity publishing. There were some nice shots of the two agents on their cellphones following up the demo tapes: "So you've got the tape. What do you think of it?" Pause while the person on the other end presumably says "It's the biggest load of cack I've ever heard." "Ah," said the agent, try-

ing not to let the disappointment show. Another cheap trick had Holdsworth singing with the backing track on her headphones, so she sounded like Eddie Murphy mangling "Roxanne" at the beginning of *48 Hours*. Yet another saw each of the three struggling with an explanation of the offside law (would a metallurgist's wife be expected to describe the properties of titanium?)

At the end, Walker's cable career continued and Holdsworth's pop aspirations remained thankfully unfulfilled, while Jason Lee signed for Watford, which meant that Ann would keep the kids in Nottingham while he stays at his mum's, though she said that they will stay together - "I can see us going all the way till we drop dead." The last shot, as Lee turned out for his new side, was of Ann looking pensive and long-suffering. Whatever the distal equivalent of a diamond geezer is, she's it.



# 17/PHOTO-SHOOT



## Awesome company joins battle as the stakes rise

Merit Cup finished the first leg of the Whitbread Round the World Race in second place, but the second leg is only a week old and the boat is already in trouble. Merit Cup's skipper, Grant Dalton, explains why he now has to concentrate his strategy on what amounts to a salvage operation.



GRANT DALTON

At last we have what the Southern Ocean is meant to be. Some strong breeze to drive the boats along and the hope that we can make up for what has proved to be a pretty disastrous opening stretch out of Cape Town on the way to Fremantle.

The guys are all dressed in survival suits to keep them warm and it's quite a contrast with the warm and sunny conditions we have been experiencing. Conditions we did not want and have not enjoyed experiencing.

It was on Wednesday that the weather front we had been waiting for came through and from slow, drifting progress we were powered up by a 30-knot wind pushing us at 15 knots. It all happened in a period of about six hours and is allowing us to push south for another 500 miles, which is about as far south as we will go. We could be going quicker if we could alter the angle and sail a little less close to the wind, but we figure that will happen anyway.

We can only hope that the frustration is over, but what will not go away yet is the worry that this is going to be our bad leg. The way the race is organised is that one long regatta is split into a number of races

and you have to expect to have a bad one some time. This one may be ours, and it is doubly unwelcome as the points system makes this a high-scoring leg, so every place we lose counts more points against us, more to make up on legs which score less.

Gunnar Krantz in Swedish Match put a four-mile dig out to sea leaving Cape Town and that was a very smart sea. But you don't normally expect to see four miles turned into 400 so we are a bit disappointed they have got such a good break.

I have to say, also, that Kvaerner deserve to be where they are because they punched out south hard and it worked for them, while Paul Standbridge in Toshiba slipped away when they were inside us. That's a bit hard to swallow.

It means we are back here fighting out the minor placings and we have got awesome company. It's not like we are fighting with all the back runners, we are up against front row players like Lawrie Smith in Silk Cut and Paul Cayard in EF Language. It's going to be very hard.

The mood on board is not at all black. We know it's part of this race that a boat that was nearly at the

back on the first leg is now so far in front that nobody is likely to catch them. You have just got to be reasonably philosophical about it.

We have sorted out the food rations. We thought it would take 16 days and planned for four meals a day after feeling we had not been eating enough on the first leg. It has been easy enough to cut that back to three meals a day in the expectation that we will take 18 days.

So far there have been no problem with the boat, mainly because of the light conditions. Just one ripped reacher as it collapsed against one of the mast spreaders in the floppy air. But we aren't expecting any more light stuff until the final approach to Fremantle. And we can still do some catching up. The way the positions are calculated is by using the great circle route, which is quite high, so the boats in the north and east always look better than the ones in the south.

We are still hoping to be fourth, though even that will be difficult against Smith and Cayard, and would be more of a salvage position than an achievement. But if any of the top three run into problems or damage, the position could change again.

It has now become a true Southern Ocean leg. The boys are a pretty even-tempered lot. They just get on with the job, whatever it is. But the tougher it is, the better it is for us now. We haven't given up all hope of a top three position on every leg.

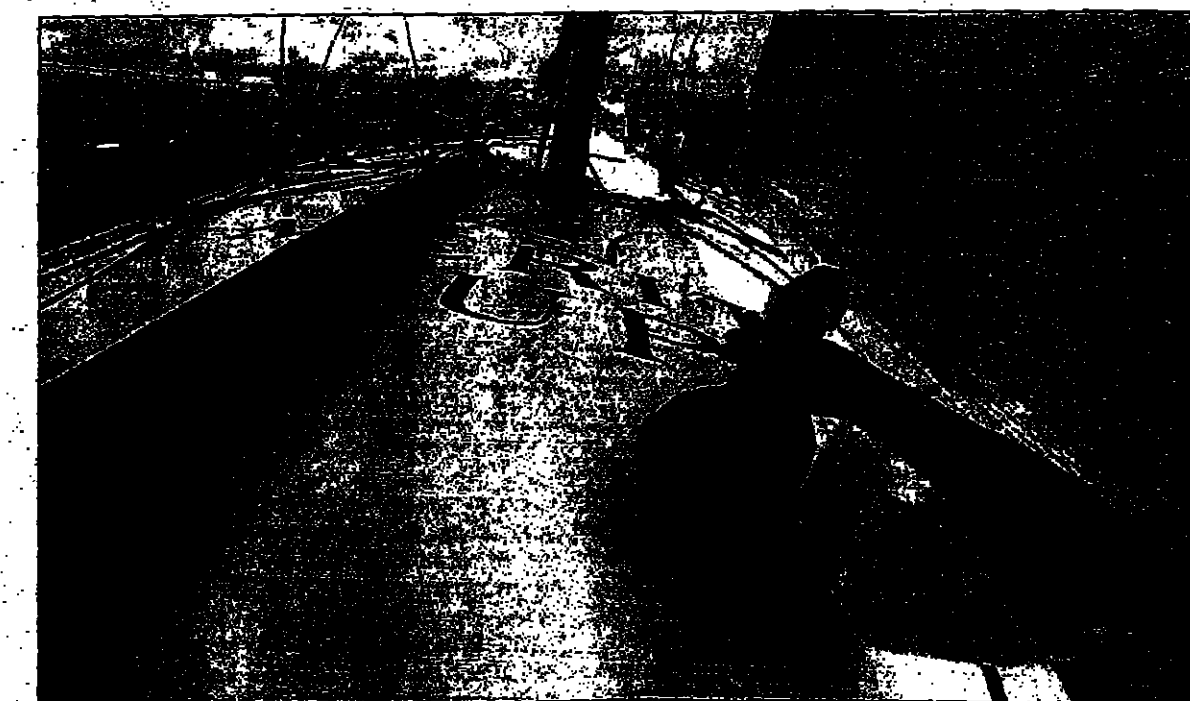
Copies of these photographs - and any others by the Independent's sports photographers David Ashdown, Peter Jay and Robert Hallam - can be ordered by telephoning 0171-293-2534.

Latest positions, Digest, page 21



## PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID ASHDOWN

Life on Merit Cup (clockwise, from top left): The lure of glory may motivate the crew but the sleeping position leaves a lot to be desired; in full sail the boat looks like a dream; the reality looks more like a lot of hard work; is that mast on straight? (bottom centre); speed in all conditions is the goal so hi-tech aids measure the conversion of wind speed into knots; skipper Dalton is in his element (top centre)



## Steeplechasing's essence: Forster and his Flyer

There is a chill in the air and the jumpers are back at the centre of racing's focus. Where better to begin than at Cheltenham where the archetypal National Hunt trainer, Tim Forster, and the most breathtaking of steeplechasers, Dublin Flyer, attempt to win the first major race of the jumps season, the Murphy's Gold Cup, for a second time.

The horse who will carry top weight in the Murphy's Gold Cup this afternoon is more than just another steeplechaser - he is history on four legs. "Hanging in my hall," John Sumner, the owner of Dublin Flyer, says, "there is a framed list, written in the most beautiful script writing, which was presented to me by Tim Forster. It lists the first 100 winners that he trained for my family. And that only goes up to 1976."

It is an image which says it all about Captain T A Forster. Loyalty, longevity, heaps of winners - and on closer inspection, no doubt, the great majority were chasers. As Sumner says, "as far as he's concerned, there's only one thing worse than hurdle racing, and that's Flat racing."

It is fences or nothing for the Captain, so much so that it is impossible to imagine anyone else's initials on Dublin Flyer's saddlecloth. Physically, the 11-year-old is magnificent in every detail, tall and athletic, and so robustly put together that you could picture him carrying a 17-stone Hussar. When he tackles Cheltenham, the ultimate test of a chaser, it is one of the most glorious sights in sport, a fearless exhibition of foot-perfect jumping. Quite simply, he and Forster were made for each other.

"The Captain knows him inside out," Brendan Powell, Dublin Flyer's jockey for the last four seasons, says. "He's quite excitable at home and if he'd gone to a lot of places, he might have been over-raced as a young horse and would probably never have been the horse he is now. The Captain brought him along slowly with just a few runs in hurdles and then it was straight to fences. He never abuses horses, and he'll always get the best out of one like that."

But it all takes time, and these days there are very few trainers who are ready to be as patient, or owners who are prepared to let them. Even Sumner admits that "over the years, we've criticised him for not running horses enough," before



Flyer in the air: With Brendan Powell on board the pair will have another crack at Cheltenham today

Photograph: Dan Abraham/Sporting Life

adding that, "with hindsight, he's always been right".

Sumner has been sending horses to Forster almost from the moment he took out a licence in 1962, and the pair won both a Hennessy and a King George more than 20 ago with Royal Marshall II. As yet, the Gold Cup itself has eluded Forster, but he has saddled three winners of the Grand National, most recently in 1985, when Last Suspect carried Hywel Davies, in the Arkle colours of Anne, Duchess of Westminster, to victory at 50-1.

The trainer's pointed advice to Davies as he legged him up beforehand - "keep re-mounting" - is racing folklore. Apart from his devotion to steeplechasers, pessimism is

the other thing that Forster is famous for, and it is not mere affectation (putting on a show for the cameras, after all, is hardly his style). "He really is like that," Henry Daly, his assistant for the last eight years,

BY GREG WOOD

says. "Everything will get beat as far as he's concerned, everything will go wrong, and it means when something goes right, he's pleased and surprised. It's just his way and he'll never change, ever."

Yet it was hardly the action of a pessimist when, with his 60th birthday fast approaching, Forster decided to move out of the Wantage yard which had been his base for three decades and start from scratch at Downton Hall estate, near Ludlow, where to begin with there were not even any gallops, just endless acres of green fields.

"I think he wanted a new spark in his life, and it came at just the right time," Sumner says, while Daly recalls that "it was a challenge, he'd been doing everything the same way for a long time, and knew what each gallop was like. Then he had to really sit down and work everything out, it was all different."

Almost inevitably, Forster rose to the challenge, and

Dublin Flyer's victory in the 1995 Mackeson (as the Murphy's was then known) and the Queen Mother Champion Chase won by Martha's Son just a few months ago are already on



Forster: always been right

any fresh list the Captain may be preparing for his wall.

The latter success was a particularly fine achievement, as Martha's Son had had just one outing - he fell - since sustaining what many had assumed was a career-ending injury 18 months beforehand. Forster paid rich tribute to his horse afterwards, but there was an uncharacteristic quiver in what is normally the most rigid of upper lips.

Everyone who loves jumping horses has reason to be grateful to Tim Forster, for cherishing the belief that if you give a horse time, it will repay your patience twice over. Dublin Flyer has already won the first big chase of the winter campaign once. The second instalment could fall due this afternoon.

## Dublin looks a capital proposition

The touts claim that Sparky Gayle could soon be the best chaser in training, but he will need to be fit as well as talented to win at Cheltenham this afternoon. Greg Wood studies the card on the most important day of the season so far.

dozen of the nine entries running from out of the handicap, the list of credible alternatives is attractively short.

Challenger Du Luc is back within a few pounds of his winning mark of 12 months ago, but he is a rather quirky animal whose form appeared to be tailing off towards the end of last season. Dublin Flyer (next best 2.55), on the other hand, is reportedly as well as ever as he approaches his 12th birthday. He was born to race at Cheltenham, would arguably have beaten Challenger Du Luc last year but for slipping up with three to four, and is very fairly priced.

Elsewhere on the card, there are potential Festival horses everywhere (it is only 123 days to Champion Hurdle day, after all), not least in the Grade Two Mackeson Novices' Hurdle. Circus Star, who finished second in last year's Triumph Hurdle but still started this season

RICHARD EDMONDSON  
MAP: Polydamas  
(Cheltenham 2.20)  
NB: Royal Scimitar  
(Windsor 3.25)

as a novice, will take some beating, but he has done very little winning for a horse of such apparent talent, and Polydamas (2.20), eighth in the Supreme Novices' Hurdle in March, is fancied to beat him.

Celtic Abbey (3.30), the best hunter chaser of last season, has improved immeasurably for a move to Venetia Williams's yard, and should take full advantage of the 24lb he receives from Coome Hill, last year's Hennessy winner, in the handicap chase, but the most solid bet of the day awaits those who hang around for the final event, the stayers' handicap hurdle.

Turnpoule, recent winner of the Cesarewitch at Newmarket, will find plenty of supporters despite carrying top weight. Three and a quarter miles around the ups and downs of Cheltenham, though, is rather different to a flat, almost straight and hurdle-free race at Newmarket, and preference is for a hurdler who knows this course well, HAILE DERRING (nap 4.05). Nigel Twiston-Davies's runner has won eight of his last 13 races, but it is his fourth place in last year's Gold Cup Final, off an identical handicap mark to today's, which gives him an outstanding chance this afternoon.

## McCoy can make the difference

The former National Hunt jockey Steve Smith Eccles (right) makes a runner-by runner analysis of today's Murphy's Gold Cup.



Dublin Flyer: It is 22 years since an 11-year-old won this but Captain Forster's grand campaigner holds a solid chance. Unlikely to slip when going well in last year's race, but I wonder if the old engine is still firing on all cylinders. He is 10lb better at Cheltenham than anywhere else.

Challenger Du Luc: Just 7lb higher than this time last year. Given the achievements of Strong Promise, who was second to him in the 1996 Murphy's, last year's winner looks leniently treated.

Sparky Gayle: A Festival winner in March, Sparky Gayle runs off just 10st 2lb and has every chance of emulating his Cathcart win. His fitness may be found out by what is certain to be a blistering pace on a testing track.

Bertone: Better than ever, defying a 6lb penalty by landing an Ascot handicap last time. With only 10st 1lb he can also play a leading role.

Senor El Betratti: This spring-heeled grey has had two outings already this term, finishing a one-paced second to Simply Dashing at Wetherby last time. He could be involved in the minor placings.

Cherrynut: Always labouring before being pulled up at Wincanton last Saturday. Prone to mistakes and is likely to blunder again.

Destin D'Estraval: Blundered five out in Callise Bay's race at Uttoxeter last Saturday. He was no match for Sparky Gayle in the Cathcart and has done nothing to suggest he can turn the tables.

Terao: A distant fourth behind Gales Cavalier and Mr Mulligan at Wincanton last time. If he was trained by anyone other than Martin Pipe, you could expect him to be open to improvement. But Martin always has his runners spot on first time.

Potter's Bay: Won at Cheltenham on his reappearance and is the choice of the Duke's stable jockey. Sure to win more races but is 16lb out of the handicap here.

Conclusion: If Sparky Gayle is fit he will take all the beating, but his fitness will be tested by Dublin Flyer. If there are chinks in his armour I expect Challenger Du Luc to come late on the scene and expose them. His pilot Tony McCoy could win on a rusty bicycle.



GREG WOOD  
THE A-Z  
OF BETTING

I is for...

Index betting: With its echoes of the FTSE and Dow Jones, index betting sounds altogether more serious and important

## Fiftysevenchannels shows who is the cross-country boss

Ireland claimed its first success in the Sporting Index Cross Country Chase when Fiftysevenchannels snatched victory from the Czechs at Cheltenham yesterday.

Ken Whelan produced the gelding with a well-timed run to earn a neck triumph in the closest finish yet for the £25,000 contest from Peruan and Market Place, two of three challengers from the Czech Republic.

It was Whelan's first winner at Cheltenham since landing last year's Kim Muir Chase on Stop The Waller during a 10-month stint in England. Fiftysevenchannels is trained by Enda Bolger, an enthusiastic Bruce Springsteen fan and named after one of the musician's songs.

The Cross Country Chase is a novelty event over a three miles seven furlongs course of 30 obstacles made up of banks,

hedges, ditches, rails, fences and hurdles. But a chaotic contest almost ensued when the field was forced to plough through a set of wooden stakes that had not been removed by race-course staff.

"The stakes were there to show us the way round on the first circuit," Whelan said. "But when we came round again they should have been moved out of the way. It could have

caused great confusion and they could have been dangerous. Somebody could have got stabbed with them."

The clerk of the course, Edward Gillespie, admitted the error and confirmed that the field had taken the right course. "The five thin stakes were placed there to guide the field towards the fourth fence, but they were still there when they came through the next time."

## Sick Call misses Navan

Imperial Call is on the injury list again and misses his outing in the Troytown Handicap Chase at Navan tomorrow. The winner of the 1996 Cheltenham Gold Cup has suffered a slight muscle pull in his quarters.

"He was a bit stiff after being exercised on the flat yesterday," Anne Sutherland, the wife of his trainer, Fergie, said yesterday. "It's only a minor problem and he should not be

any more than a week on the sidelines."

Imperial Call was dogged by injury last season and was pulled up in the last Gold Cup. He made a splendid comeback this season when finishing second to Dorans Pride, the favourite for the Gold Cup, at Clonmel. The performance prompted bookmakers to cut Imperial Call's price for winning back his Gold Cup crown.















## Hereford's healing will be helped by settling an old score

Hereford lost their League status after a 1-1 home draw with Brighton on an emotional final day of last season. By extraordinary coincidence the two teams meet again in the FA Cup first round today.

When the season opened, a new set of photographs adorned the walls of the manager's office and home dressing-room at Hereford United. They showed players and supporters weeping, or with heads bowed, after May's fight to the finish with Brighton & Hove Albion. Now, like Hereford on that feverish afternoon, the pictures have come down.

The stark, black-and-white images were intended to instil in everyone connected with the club what it meant to relinquish Football League status, filling them with a desire to regain it via promotion from the Vauxhall Conference. But when the FA Cup's infinite capacity for coincidence brings Brighton back to Edgar Street today, they will be gathering dust behind a cupboard.

"We don't need photos to remind us of how bad it felt," reasons Graham Turner, Hereford's director of football. "That day, I remembered Bill Shankly's famous saying about football being more than a matter of life or death. He wasn't talking literally - there are obviously many more tragic circumstances - but the feeling of loss made me understand what he meant."

At the risk of opening old wounds, it may be appropriate to put the contest in context. When the final day of last season dawned, Hereford occupied bottom place in the Third Division. Brighton, the only other side who could be relegated, were level on points but had scored more goals. They needed only a draw to escape.

An own goal by Kerry Mayo

threatened to earn him the freedom of Hereford and cider for life, only for Robbie Reinelt to equalise and set up the most fraught 28 minutes imaginable. When it was over and Brighton had slipped their chains of seven months, the emotions which engulfed Turner's team belied the belief of many football fans that they have a monopoly of feeling for a club.

Hereford reportedly changed in silence, broken only by Sussex's songs of relief outside. "Oh no," says Turner. "What you could hear was our lads sobbing, some of them hardened pros who've been in

### FA CUP COUNTDOWN



BY PHIL SHAW

the game a long time. Whatever noise Brighton or their supporters were making was blotted out. It was like a dream.

"I've never seen so many grown men crying - on the pitch, in the boardroom, in the stands. It really was traumatic. I didn't think I'd ever see sport get to people so intensely. People might think 'Hereford's only a backwater, so it doesn't really matter', but it was shattering for those involved. The next day on TV I saw Middlesbrough fans in tears because they'd gone down. We lost far more."

Turner recalls feeling an "enormous sense of responsibility" as the final whistle sounded and snarling police dogs barred his way down the tunnel. There had been mitigating factors: he had not bought anyone for the best part of two years because of a transfer embargo and he was forced to sell five key players. He decided, however, that of-

fering his resignation was the only honourable course.

Hereford's chairman, Peter Hill, refused to accept it, though it was the reaction of the supporters that persuaded Turner to battle on. "I got dozens of letters urging me not to give up. They even stuck posters on the doors saying I had to stay."

As one who was hounded out of Wolves, a victim of the very expectations he had raised, he appreciated the irony. When he was at his lowest ebb that Sunday, the Molineux owner Sir Jack Hayward rang and insisted on treating Turner and his family to a holiday in the Bahamas. He did not stop calling until his former manager agreed.

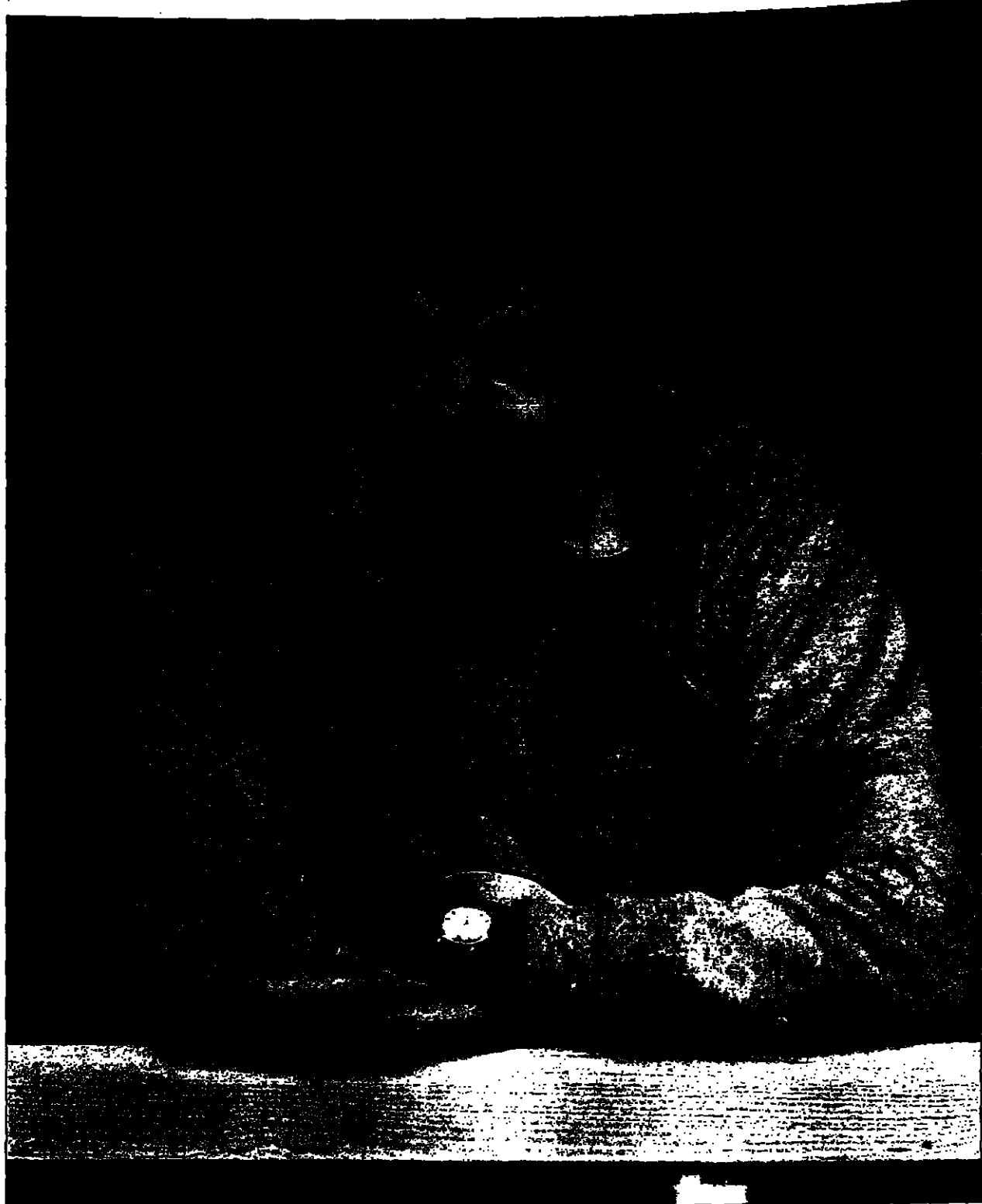
After the initial grieving, the club and city came round to thinking positively. The Conference offered a way back to the League, and by staying full-time Hereford planned to emulate Lincoln, Colchester and Darlington in bouncing back. Currently lying eighth, they are handily placed, but even that position was not achieved without pain.

Only weeks ago, the club's cash-flow crisis deepened to the extent that they were unable to meet their obligations to the players. Those paid monthly had to wait seven weeks between salary slips; the weekly earners were more than three weeks behind.

"These fellas, who aren't on big money anyway, have got young families, mortgages to pay and need to put petrol in their car," Turner says. "But they responded superbly. In a strange way, adversity seemed to bind them closer together."

The situation had another unexpected side-effect. Several of the squad live a considerable distance from Hereford and were struggling to make ends meet, so Turner cut the training back to a couple of days a week. The next Saturday he was struck by how well they performed. The following weekend they won 5-1 at highly placed Morecambe.

"I don't think you could do that every week, but they did



Graham Turner is motivated by a day when he had 'never seen so many grown men crying'

Photograph: David Ashdown

look refreshed. I heard a rugby union player recently say that when they were part-time and trained just twice a week, the Saturday game was the highlight. Since they'd gone full-time and were training every day, it didn't have the same magic."

A Cup replay with Sittingbourne brought in urgently needed revenue (helping Hereford see the bright side of Trevor Matthewson's diving header into his own net in Kent). Likewise an average gate which, at 2,800, is up on this time last year. The Brighton tie

has generated further revenue, fuelling Turner's optimism.

"There's a lot of pressing debts - the VAT people and taxman are chasing us - and we've lost £100,000 in Football League money. But we're actually operating profitably because we've cut right back on wages and support has been so good."

Hereford have no chief executive or commercial manager, and Turner reckons he spends as much time doing the accounts as on the training ground. "It's been all hands to the pump to keep the club

afloat. I've done everything from driving a dumper truck to rotavate the pitch to selling advertising boards."

The Cup was the making of Hereford - their epic victory over Newcastle helped them gain election to the Fourth Division 25 years ago despite failing to win the Southern League - and it could be the saving of them. Two years ago they netted £200,000 from two tussles with Tottenham. According to Turner, a similar draw this season could wipe out their problems overnight.

Before they start dreaming of Old Trafford or Anfield there is a score to settle. As they emerged into the night at Sittingbourne, a press man said to Turner: "You'll never guess who you've drawn." He did not need Mystic Meg to know that the answer was the B-word.

"Brighton haven't started well and won't relish coming back here," Turner says. "I won't regard it as revenge - one Cup win can't compensate for losing League status - but we'd take a lot of satisfaction from beating them."

## FA censures Scales for bet

The Football Association is to write to the Tottenham defender John Scales to remind him of the rule banning players from gambling on matches after he revealed how he had won £800 on a game.

Scales said on last night's BBC *Weekend Watchdog* programme that he and a handful of his then Wimbledon teammates had staked money on him to score the first goal in an FA Cup match against Sunderland in 1994 and won.

"What we did was just for a bit of fun, through naivety more than anything," he said. He added that he had only ever bet on football five or six times and would not do so again, given the FA's recent crackdown on gambling in the game.

The FA is not expected to take any disciplinary action against Scales in the light of his admission.

What was so wonderful about the near-success of 1967 was that it was so totally unexpected

### FAN'S EYE VIEW No.232 NOTTINGHAM FOREST BY STEPHEN SHAW

When you support a team which, within the space of three exquisite years, won the European Cup twice, the League Cup twice, the League Championship once and pulled in, also, a runners-up spot in the League and a third Wembley appearance, then that side is likely to be your all-time favourite. Certainly, the names of Shilton, Birtles, Robertson et al are burned deeply into the red and white souls of Forest's supporters. Yet, for older fans, the team which, a decade earlier, failed narrowly to win the Double, holds a special magic.

What was so wonderful about the near-success of 1967 was that it was so totally unexpected. Looking back now, the breathtaking success of the late 70s seems like an impossible dream. It did not seem so then. The rest of the world may re-

member what it was doing when it heard that Kennedy had been shot but Forest fans recall with delicious clarity what they were doing when they heard that Brian Clough was to become the new manager. I was being given a lift home after a lunchtime pint when we were waved down by a mutual friend who yelled the news across the street. He was bundled into the car and we returned to my house where we spent the afternoon sinking mugs of coffee and discussing the future under Brian Clough. By the time they left we had presented Forest with every cup in Europe.

Wonderful though the following years were, they represented just a faithful reading of the script. The surprise was not that success came, but that it was not sustained. For Clough, the line between brilliant improvisation and eccentric

blunder was, sometimes, a fine one.

By contrast, 1967 came as a complete shock. The previous season had seen a narrow escape from relegation. For me, that season had brought a particular humiliation. As a student at Hull University, I had been delighted when the FA Cup draw had sent Forest to play the Third Division locals at Boothferry Park. I went along to enjoy the expected ritual slaughter. The game provided a spectacle of bungling inadequacies demolished by superior talent. Hull won. I was asked the score, for weeks to come, by grinning faces that I hardly knew.

Back in Nottingham anger took the form of a petition demanding the signature of Joe Baker. The idea was absurd. If Forest's hesitant forays into the transfer market took them to other First Division clubs then it was to buy reserves, not current England international centre forwards. Baker's arrival symbolised the shocks to come. A return from long-term injury of Frank Wignall, another international striker, and the emergence of the brilliant winger, Ian Storey-Moore, promised better things for the future, but, as Christmas 1966 approached, Forest lay in mid-table where they

"entertained" crowds of around 22,000.

Six straight wins around the new year shot the side to third place. The traditionally elegant also-rans added a touch of steel to undoubted skill. Nottingham responded magnificently. After so many false starts, this looked like the real thing. Crowds rocketed to over 40,000.

The climax came in the sixth round of the FA Cup. There was a minute left. Baker was off the field injured. Far-east and Everton shared four goals. No one fancied a return at Goodison. There was a mad scramble around the Everton goal. Hearts soared and sank as the ball ping-ponged, as if in slow motion, off woodwork and bodies. Moore strained to reach the ball with his head. It drifted slowly through the air as if being pulled back by a su-

pernatural force. It crossed the line.

Pandemonium. The release of sound and emotion was volcanic. The human frame can take you no further down the road to ecstasy than this.

Alas, it was the last throw. Without Baker, the edge was gone. The gap below Manchester United was too great. In the Cup, a rare long-range goal from Jimmy Greaves put Forest behind Spurs in the semi-final. Terry Hennessy's only mistake of the season let in Frank Saul for a second.

The dream was put on hold for a decade. The year of 1967 left us without a trophy but with a memorable song.

Oh, we're better than United.

And we're louder than the Kop.

We're second in the League. And we should be at the top.

## Why Ntamark needs to make mark

The first round of the FA Cup takes places this weekend. Paul Newman says the GM Vauxhall Conference leaders offer one of the best prospects of an upset

While most of his footballing compatriots will focus their attention on Wembley today, Charlie Ntamark will be concentrating - until five o'clock at least - on affairs at a less celebrated English football venue.

Ntamark, a former Cameroon international, played for Walsall for seven years but left at the end of last season to study law at Birmingham University. In his spare time he now plays for the GM Vauxhall Conference side, Hednesford Town, who visit Hull City this afternoon in the first round of the FA Cup.

"I will be looking out for the Cameroon result but I have got a game to play in as well, which is more important," he said. "This is going to be the first time I have played for a non-League side against a League team in a Cup game, so it will be interesting. I have been on the receiving end of a shock result before when Yeovil beat Walsall a few years ago and it wasn't a pleasant experience."

Hednesford have high hopes of victory over opponents who were recently celebrating their own giant-killing act. Mark Hateley's team knocked Crystal Palace out of the Coca-Cola Cup, but today they are in 22nd place in the Third Division.

Hednesford lead the Conference and their Cup exploits last season will give them particular encouragement: after victories over Blackpool and York City Hednesford gave Middlesbrough a scare or two before going down 3-2.

Hednesford offer one of the best giant-killing possibilities on a weekend when David and Goliath stories look hard to predict. Eight ties pit non-League clubs against one another, while 10 of the other 16 minnows have been drawn away from home.

However, four Conference teams with home advantage will fancy their chances. Hereford have the chance to earn revenge for their relegation by Brighton last season, Southport face York, Slough meet Cardiff, and Woking, the greatest giant-killers of recent years, take on Southend.

Woking are aiming to reach the second round for the ninth year in succession. Geoff Chapman, their long-serving manager, and Clive Walker, the former Chelsea winger, have both moved on, but John McGovern, the former Nottingham Forest midfielder, has taken over the reins and continues the good work.

Hendon (against Leyton Orient) and Margate (against Fulham) are the other non-League teams with home advantage against League opposition. While the downfall of Kevin Keegan's Fulham tomorrow would provide the bigger shock, Hendon appear to have the better chance of glory against opponents from the bottom half of the Third Division.

Blyth Spartans aim to add to their legend when they face one of the great names of Cup history, Blackpool, while last season's headline-makers, Chesterfield, will hope not to go into role reversal at home to Northwich Victoria.



## TRY NEW PLANTERS AND SAY GOODBYE TO ALL OTHER NUTS.

PEANUTS

CRUNCHY PEANUTS

HONEY ROAST PEANUTS

MIXED NUTS

One mouth-dazzling taste of our new nuts and you'll happily bid all others goodbye.

Get reacquainted with our Dry Roast or Honey Roast Peanuts.

By rights, you'll soon be singing their praises from the rooftops.

Albeit, an octave or two higher.







## Stage set for England understudies

To many people today's England international against Cameroon at Wembley is just a meaningless friendly. It isn't to the players.

With the World Cup just seven months away, and England not playing again until February, this is their chance to leave a lingering impression over the winter months. Glenn Moore reports from Bisham Abbey.

Wembley's casting couch welcomes a clutch of aspirants this evening as auditions open for the potentially award-winning role of Alan Shearer's understudy.

With the Newcastle United striker still a far from certain starter for England in France next summer, Robbie Fowler, Andy Cole and Chris Sutton are seeking the chance to nudge Ian Wright aside as understudy-elect.

With the less promising position of David Seaman's reserve also up for grabs, along with defensive and midfield positions, there is much of interest in tonight's match against the potentially awkward Cameroon, one of the World Cup's earliest qualifiers.

As Wright is lacking form and confidence and nursing an ankle injury he is unlikely to start, nor is Sutton who is new to the squad. This leaves Fowler and Cole as the most likely first contenders and who plays may depend on whether Paul Scholes is fit after a chest cold.

If Scholes does play, Cole, who has played only 33 minutes in two substitute appearances for England, may get the nod but Fowler remains favourite. He has started twice, come on as substitute four times and scored once so far. His ability to take chances is not in doubt but his ability to find them at international level remains unproven as does his temperament after three dismissals for retaliation.

"He has talent," said Hoddle yesterday, "but there are things in his game which he needs to improve on at this level. You are marked tighter so movement needs to be a lot subtler, your

touch and hold-up play is important. You need to keep the ball in international football and the hardest place to do so is in the last third. It took Alan Shearer and Teddy Sheringham time to get that assurance."

Unfortunately for Fowler he does not have that much time. "As I know myself," added Hoddle, "it takes 10 to 15 games to make - or break - an international player and not many get that opportunity. The jump from League football to international is massive. The only way to find out if he can score at international level is by giving him games but I only have six to play with, not 14. If players get an opportunity they must take their chance as Paul Scholes did."

On Fowler's disciplinary problems Hoddle added: "He needs more settling time. All you ask of young players is that they learn from mistakes. It was a silly sending-off a few weeks ago [against Bolton] and it is only him who loses from it."

"I've not spoken to him about that. Sometimes you want to see if players learn themselves. He is young enough to do that but sometimes it needs explaining. He has tremendous ability and I have belief in him."

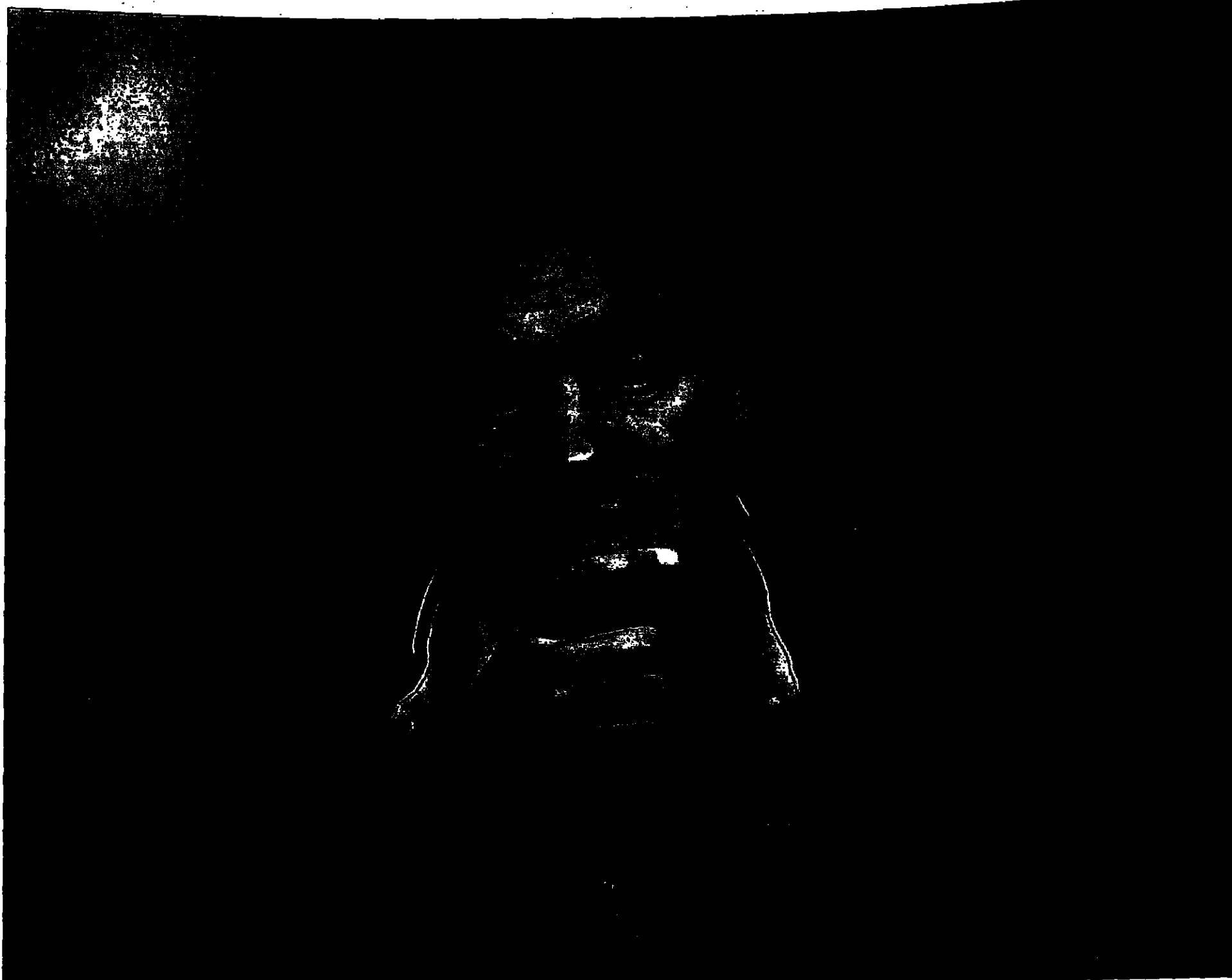
Since Cameroon are noted for their tackling this could be a good test of Fowler's temperament.

With five substitutes allowed out of eight on the bench, Cole should also get a chance as should whichever goalkeeper between Nigel Martyn and Ian Walker starts on the bench. The in-form Martyn should start.

In defence, Rio Ferdinand may win his first cap while Andy Hinchcliffe and Phil Neville contest the left-flank position in the absence of Graeme Le Saux.

In midfield Gascoigne seems a likely starter alongside Paul Ince, who retains the captaincy. With Shearer, Sheringham, Tony Adams and Stuart Pearce all out that was to be expected but it is, said Hoddle, because of the job he did in Rome not by default.

The performance is the main thing, but the result may be more important than first appears. Fifa are yet to decide whether to use their rankings in deciding seedings for the World Cup draw and a win will keep England highly placed.



Glenn Hoddle: 'There are seven months to go to the World Cup so I can't get too excited, but it is a superb feeling to know you are there'

Photograph: Adam Burden/PA

## Hoddle's French campaign begins at Wembley

Even in the euphoric aftermath of England's World Cup qualification in Rome last month, Glenn Hoddle was quick to stress his job was 'only half-done'. With England playing Cameroon at Wembley today, the England coach spoke to our Football Correspondent, Glenn Moore, about his plans for the next seven months.

This is the job that drove Don Revie to the desert, turned Bobby Robson grey and had Graham Taylor waking up at night with his pyjamas drenched in sweat. Even Terry Venables was drowned under a tide of litigation, personal criticism and Football Association whistles.

After 18 months of being England coach, Glenn Hoddle ought, at least, to be nervous or defensive with the press and showing a greying or receding hairline. Not a bit of it, he is all smiles and jokes and, close up, still looks young enough to play. Watching him on the

training pitch at Bisham Abbey this week he still seems good enough to do so as well. Hoddle is getting used to confounding expectation. 'He was seen as too young and too soft when he was appointed last year. Not a bit of it, the 40-year-old has made a virtue of his relative youth - from David Beckham to Matt Le Tissier current players quote Hoddle as their idol - and he has a steady sense of purpose.'

Having steered England to the World Cup finals for the first time in eight years he now has to plan their campaign in France next summer beginning with today's friendly with Cameroon. It is a mission he is clearly relishing for it requires assessment of his players' talent and their temperament.

"I need to know which players have the right temperament to play at this level," he said as we sat under the portraits of Elizabethan nobles in Bisham's Warwick Room yesterday.

"It is being able to play on the big occasions like Rome, they don't come much bigger than then. It is what you can see of a player in the week and how and whether it starts to change on match day - or even when he goes down the tunnel on to

the pitch. They are the things you need to be aware of and are looking for all the time, you know players can handle that they have the temperament."

"You can all the talent in the world but..." He gestures outside, past the damp tennis courts and the russet-leaved trees to the practice pitch. "I look at the training ground here and there is a lot of talent. There is not much to choose between certain players, but it is the ones who can take that on to the pitch at Premiership level, European level, and the ultimate stage, international level. The bigger the game, the more you get to know about your players."

Hoddle has six matches to determine his 22-man World Cup squad. Cameroon are first, Sweden and Portugal are among possible future opponents along with, depending on next month's draw, Colombia, another African side and, perhaps, a weaker team for the final match.

"It is no good just having different styles of opposition, you need good opposition," he said. "It is a juggling act between having the continuity of winning matches with balanced teams and being able to give other players chances as you can lose a key player at any time."

"Then there are the mechanics of planning a squad, getting both the right mix of players and of personalities."

"Say I lose Paul Scholes and Teddy Sheringham, not out-and-out goalscorers but people who score goals. Then I might think I need three 'goalscorer' types like Alan Shearer, Robbie Fowler, Ian Wright and Andy Cole. But if there are other options, like Paul and Teddy, I might think I can get away with two."

Then there is the group interaction. "I know from two World Cups and two European Championships as a player that that is one of the most important aspects."

"Things go wrong sometimes and it is because of boredom and being in each others' pockets for six weeks. It is human nature."

"There is not much freedom when you are in training and in a camp situation. It is very important how we deal with that, we have to consider the mentality of our players. What is right for Germany and Brazil is not right for ours."

"In a borderline case I might go for the person with the healthier temperament around the camp."

"There comes a time when

it goes flat. It did in Le Tournoi and it was exactly when I expected it to. It will happen in the World Cup preparation so you have to think about it. There might be periods when I don't have everyone together for a long time."

"I still got to look at medical side, take on advice, but we will look at things like the family situation. In Colorado [before the 1986 World Cup] we had a week with the wives out but the distance is different this time around. France is just an hour and a half away and there are different options."

Once the tournament starts the hope is that momentum will provide the lift. "With Le Tournoi it went flat before we played Brazil but we had already won the tournament so it was different to going into a quarter-final or, please God, a semi-final. That's enough to keep it boiling."

As part of the long-term bonding exercise, Hoddle, his staff and the squad went out on Tuesday for a meal. Wine was allowed and a good time had by all accounts. "It was a way of saying well done for qualifying," Hoddle explained. "Les Ferdinand came and Alan Shearer and Stuart Pearce could have but they had

problems with the distance and their rehabilitation."

"We went to an Italian restaurant - well, we had to really - and it was an important occasion. It was the right time for it and the players appreciated it."

Such a mood seemed a distant prospect when England lost at home to Italy in February but, insisted Hoddle, "I always felt we could win the group, even after we lost at home to Italy."

"I needed time to get ideas across. You need time to work with your players and progress as a team. In this game things are looked at instantly. It has taken me 18 months to do with England what you would do in six weeks pre-season and four or five games at club level."

"We are progressing and if we continue to do so there is a great opportunity for us. There are seven months to go so I can't get too excited, but it is a superb feeling to know you are there, that you have this momentum to grow. But we don't want too much too soon."

"There is a lot of planning that's been done and a lot of preparation to do. We now have to win matches on the way while doing things with the team. It is a different challenge to qualifying."

## Mboma expects tough task

Patrick Mboma, the Cameroon striker, is relishing the challenge of facing England at Wembley tonight but believes that Glenn Hoddle's side are the clear favourites to win.

Mboma, 27, is in top form at the moment, having scored 10 goals in his 11 international appearances, including six in Cameroon's unbeaten qualification route to next year's World Cup finals.

But he warned that Cameroon would have trouble in recording their first win over England at the third attempt,

having lost in the 1990 World Cup quarter-finals and at Wembley in 1991.

Mboma, who plays his club football in Japan, said: "We are 11 players against 11 players so we will try to win. But I think it's 70:30 for England. The English national team is very strong. The last time I saw them was against Italy recently and they played very good football."

The Cameroon coach, Jean Manga, has brought what is virtually a full-strength squad to England, including several players based with European teams.

This is the job that drove Don Revie to the desert, turned Bobby Robson grey and had Graham Taylor waking up at night with his pyjamas drenched in sweat. Even Terry Venables was drowned under a tide of litigation, personal criticism and Football Association whistles.

After 18 months of being England coach, Glenn Hoddle ought, at least, to be nervous or defensive with the press and showing a greying or receding hairline. Not a bit of it, he is all smiles and jokes and, close up, still looks young enough to play. Watching him on the

shirt with the inscription: "179 - Just Done It".

There have been endless variations on this theme - Fowler went back-to-front, Ravanelli went headless - and on goal celebrations as a whole.

And while the previous two decades had given us Mick Channon's windmill and Hugo Sanchez's backflip (later to be championed by Peter Beagrie), it was Roger Milla's wiggle of the hips at the corner flag after Cameroon's victory over Argentina in Italia 90 that really started the rot.

Some might argue that extravagant celebrations are part of the show formerly known as football - OK if you like that sort of thing. I can live with Asprilla's cartwheel, and even Collymore's gun-toting (since it's rarely seen these days) but I can't take any more of Chelsea's stage productions or Aylesbury's ducks

or variations on the Bebo-to-Romario cradling scene (as witnessed at Darlington last weekend).

You'd have thought Chelsea might have toned it down a little. After all, they were already missing their Nigerian defender Celestine Babayaro (injured celebrating a pre-season goal) when Frank Sinclair was fined for doing a Sammy Nelson on scoring earlier this season. On the contrary, their latest showpiece involves kissing the scorer's boots, although to be fair if you're Frank Leboeuf and hardly ever score then you're going to make a song and dance out of doing so.

If you're Marco Negri, however, and you score (at least once) almost every week, then it's nothing to write home about. Which might explain why Rangers' Italian striker is expressionless when he scores,

in stark contrast to the man whose goalscoring mantle he's inherited at Ibrox.

Ally McCoist's goal celebrations usually involve nothing more elaborate than a wide smile and open arms in the manner of most classic strikers - Dalglish, Shearer, Lister, Rush and Gerd Muller spring immediately to mind - whose celebrations are as instinctive as the strike itself. That was certainly true of Denis Law's characteristic one-armed, pointed salute. (The only goal Law didn't celebrate in this way was the back-heeled that relegated his old club Manchester United in 1974.)

But in mitigation of over-the-top celebrations you could compare goals to full moons in that they make people do strange things. Andy Goram recalls jumping into the arms of a nearby policeman when

Rangers scored against Celtic once (luckily the policeman was wearing blue and white ribbons); while the former Dundee United keeper Alan Main slid towards his fans so flamboyantly after a goal in a Dundee derby that he was fined for causing a breach of the peace.

The celebration handwagon has gathered such pace of late (Barnet's prolific striker Sean Devine apparently has a different celebration for every goal he scores, so his imagination must be fertile) that it's easy to forget referees are meant to book over-zealous players. In theory the FA claim celebrations are OK "as long as they're kept on the pitch", and in practice referees aren't keen on the directive. The Scottish ref Jim McGilvray even resigned last season, saying: "Having to book Gazza for celebrating a goal [against Partick Thistle] was the last straw."

We're becoming like robots with a list of instructions."

It was, of course, Gazza who enraged one half of Glasgow with his flute-playing mime after his first Old Firm goal, and Gazza, too, who stage-managed the infamous dentist's chair celebration after scoring against Scotland in Euro 96. Personally, however, Stuart Pearce's celebration after his penalty against Spain will linger longer in my mind. Like Marco Tardelli's unforgettable celebration of his strike in the 1982 World Cup final, it was spontaneous rather than scripted.

In fact, the only scripted celebration I rate was the dive with which Jurgen Klinsmann announced his arrival in English football. Ironically, he was asked to perform it by Charlie Sheringham. Perhaps soon should have given dad some better advice last Sunday.



OLIVIA BLAIR  
FINDS LITTLE  
TO APPLAUD  
AFTER A GOAL  
IS SCORED

Highbury witnessed five great goals last Sunday, but the manner in which they were celebrated has rather taken the gloss off at least three of them.

First, Patrick Vieira injured himself celebrating Arsenal's second; then Teddy Sheringham kissed his badge after netting his brace and was reported to the police by an irate Arsenal fan who deemed the gesture to be "provocative". Vieira was unfortunate, Sheringham just unwise, since Highbury is a ground where he will always be persona non grata. He had been incessantly goaded by the Arsenal fans for being a Spurs old boy, although his gesture - aimed at showing where his loyalties now lie - was hardly likely to placate the boo-boys.

In fact, Spurs fans have more right to feel aggrieved at the ease with which Shering-

ham appears to have forgotten his roots. At any rate, the objection was rich coming from a fan of the club which pays Ian Wright's wages.

Arsenal's striker honed his shooting skills at Selhurst Park but became the most unpopular man in SE25 when he kissed his Arsenal badge on his return to his old stamping ground. Talk about biting the hand that fed you.

That, however, is just one of the celebrations in Wright's repertoire, so much so that there was (almost) as much intrigue over how he would celebrate breaking Cliff Bastin's record as when he would break it. In the event, even the FA - who issued a circular asking players to keep their shirts on after Duncan Ferguson went topless to celebrate scoring in his first Merseyside derby - turned a blind eye to Wright baring his chest to reveal a T-







# SPORT

Saturday 15 November 1997

## Woodward looking for new beginnings and quick fixes

The last three England-Australia matches played in this country were all watershed affairs for one side or the other.

Chris Hewett says today's unpredictable contest between two teams in the early stages of evolution could prove equally significant as the 1999 World Cup inches ever closer.

Contrary to popular belief, Clive Woodward has not broken new ground by sining a two-fingered salute at the safety-first brigade and sending an entire crèche-load of comparative toddlers into the fire and fury of a Twickenham Test against the Wallabies. Dick Greenwood did something similar in 1984 - Nigel Melville, Stuart Barnes, Gareth Chilcott and Nigel Redman were among those capped for the first time that day - and the experiment backfired with such violence that England's youth policy disappeared without trace.

Until, that is, 1988, when Geoff Cooke played the boldest of hands. The gambler bit the jackpot, England won and the Will Carling era was born. As a direct response to that setback, the Wallabies gave their old guard a one-way ticket to the scrapheap, replaced them with a bunch of kids and went on to beat England in the 1991 World Cup Final.

It could go either way this afternoon and therein lies the fascination. An English victory would lead the new coach an air

of authority to go alongside the energy, enterprise and enthusiasm he brought to the job. Defeat by a Wallaby side some way short of full throttle would have the opposite effect, especially with the All Blacks and the Springboks lurking around the next couple of corners.

"Look, this isn't a World Cup final," said the coach this week. "Had it been, I might have picked a different side. I can't honestly say that I'd have picked the same line-up had we been playing New Zealand."

"I want to win this game and I'm as passionate in my desire as any of the players but if we don't win I'm not going to lose a night's sleep. Whatever happens, we'll learn from the experience. It's the first step on the road to 1999, not the be-all and end-all."

Woodward can rest easy in the knowledge that by naming five debutants in a line-up every bit as radical as those of '84 and '88, he has caught the mood of the times. Even the manager

Roger Uttley is reinventing himself as an ultra-modern baby boomer; the grizzled veteran of England's 1980 Grand Slam side and assistant coach of Carling's massively experienced and deeply conservative team of the early 1990s has thrown himself fully behind the new idealism.

"When we won the Slam, we had a pack containing unproven England captains and more caps than anyone could be bothered to count," he said. "But the frustrating thing was that we were only brought together in the twilight of our careers. Within a year or two, the whole side had fallen apart through injury and retirement. We'd actually been around throughout the 1970s, but no one had put us all on the field at the same time. The idea behind this side is to get the form players together early and let them grow."

The only trouble with playing the long game is that the short game has a nasty habit of getting in the way. It is perfectly

possible that Woodward is on to something special, that the likes of Matt Perry, Andy Long, Will Greenwood and Tony Diprose will form the spine of a side capable of mounting a realistic challenge for the Webb Ellis Trophy in two years' time. But to keep them together, the selectors need the oxygen of results. Given that the next four matches are against New Zealand (twice), South Africa and France in Paris, a win today is essential for morale.

Fortunately, the Wallabies are in no obvious shape to cuff the English youngsters around the ear and send them off to bed without their supper. Rod Macqueen, the Australian coach, is also feeling his way and although his back division is full of pace and know-how, he has been forced to rebuild his forward pack almost from scratch.

Macqueen and his squad have spent a thoroughly uncomfortable week on the wrong end of some spiteful Australian tongue-lashings. "Spineless", "gutless" and "soulless" were just some of the adjectives applied to the Wallabies' 18-16 reverse in Argentina last weekend.

Few recent Tests have been quite so difficult to call with any degree of confidence. If Jason Leonard, Martin Johnson and the new captain Lawrence Dallaglio punch their collective weight up front and take the game by the scruff of its neck, the youngsters outside should flourish. If, on the other hand, John Eales inspires his unsung pack by turning in one of his occasional unbelievable performances rather than his usual great one, the Wallabies possess the cutting edge to prevail. It could well go down to the wire.

### ENGLAND v AUSTRALIA

at Twickenham

M Perry	Bath	15	S Larkman	ACT
D Rees	Sale	14	B Stone	Queensland
W Greenwood	Leicester	13	T Horan	Queensland
P de Ghanville	Bath	12	P Howard	ACT
A Adair	Bath	11	J Rafter	ACT
M Catt	Bath	10	E Flacey	Queensland
K Bracken	Saracens	9	G Gregan	ACT
J Leonard	Harlequins	1	R Harry	NSW
A Long	Bath	2	M Forley	Queensland
W Green	Wasps	3	A Blades	NSW
H Johnson	Leicester	4	J Langford	ACT
G Archer	Newcastle	5	J Eales	Queensland
L Delgado	Wasps, capt	6	O Flanagan	ACT
A Diprose	Saracens	8	W O'Brien	NSW
R Hill	Saracens	7	B Robinson	ACT

Substitutes: 16 P Grayson (Northampton), 17 A Healey (Leicester), 18 G Rowntree (Leicester), 19 R Codrill (Leicester), 20 D Greenwood (Leicester), 21 M Back (Leicester)

Referee: A Watson (SA)

Kick-off: 2.0 (Sky Sports 1)

## From Telford to Hannover and back again: how Tim Henman went in search of a \$100,000 prize



Tim Henman on his way to victory over Jamie Delgado in the quarter-finals at Telford yesterday. He served 18 aces



Minutes after beating Delgado, Henman leaves Telford

Tim Henman had been expecting to finish a low-key week in Telford at the National Tennis Championships until his phone rang at 11.30 on Thursday night.

An injury to Sergi Bruguera left the organisers of the ATP Tour World Championship in Hannover desperately seeking a replacement. Henman agreed to answer the call and what should have been a comparatively quiet end to the week in Shropshire developed into a frantic dash between Britain and Germany.

### HENMAN'S SCHEDULE

23.30 Thursday: Henman, staying in the Telford area for the national championships, receives a phone call inviting him to replace Bruguera in Hannover. He will play only one match, against Yevgeny Kafelnikov, but victory would be worth \$100,000 (£60,000) and 80 world ranking points. The ATP will also pay him \$10,000 (£6,000) for taking part.

09.30 yesterday: Shortly after arriving by car at the Telford Racquet and Fitness Club, Henman attends a press conference and announces his plans to travel to Hannover. 11.08: Henman starts his Telford quarter-final against Jamie Delgado. 12.02: Henman completes a 6-4, 6-2 victory over Delgado, hitting 18 aces. The win guarantees him £22,200. 12.15: Henman skips post-match press conference and leaves by car for Birmingham airport.

John Roberts, page 21



Hannover-bound: Henman climbs into a car for the drive to Birmingham airport

Photographs: Allsport

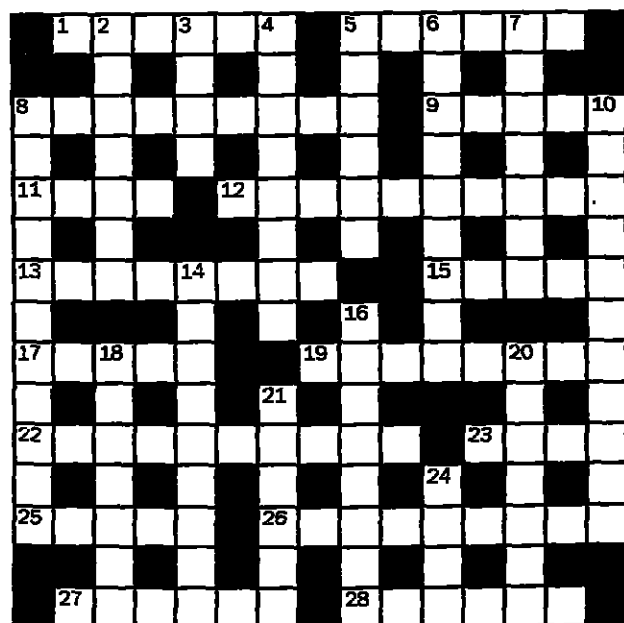
### THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3457, Saturday 15 November

By Spurious

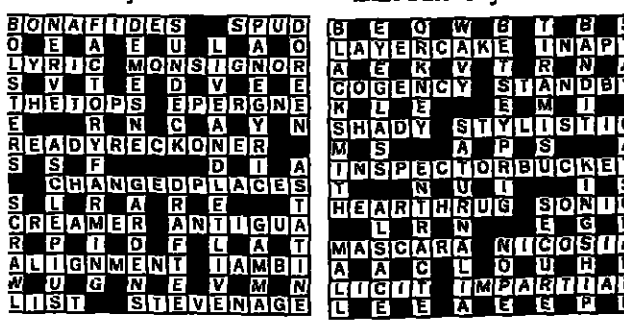
ACROSS

DOWN



Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution



- 1 Examples of rivers ending in D? (6)  
2 Difficult exam, one in which class can be seen to cry? (7)  
3 Stupid baronet's invested in Yorkshire Water (6)  
4 Again directors will give support to person who lies (9)  
5 Box for beer down under (4)  
6 Harrier's fears are unfounded (8)  
7 Out-of-date northern town takes time to replace municipal leader (3-3)  
8 Appellation given to line? Mason, perhaps, though not Dixon (5,4)  
9 Before getting involved in wrestling see man in charge (7)  
10 Chap from finance department suggesting shopper may get black eye here? (4,7)  
11 A return of service from a great distance (4)  
12 Decree whereby one's recruited into the artillery (9)  
13 More usual sort of undergraduate (8)  
14 Property man? (6,5)  
15 Float airily on high (5)  
16 Grandee enraged valiant Latvian (8)  
17 Top of packing-case showing cap size, in a word? (7)  
18 Runner from Brixton? (7)  
19 Napoleon's decoration a fresco painter left unfinished at first (8)  
20 Unemotional woman called Lettice? (7)  
21 Muscly, awkward, ungainly (6)  
22 Industrial science would be involved in most of cologne they processed (10)  
23 Rector in bishop's office is uncomfortably hot and dry (4)  
24 Muck, for instance, is left everywhere initially (4)  
25 Mature writer introduced by Royal Institution (5)  
26 Verification of resources statesmen worked out (5,4)  
27 Salad plant, in Cyprus always about a pound (6)  
28 Australian's bait is briefly seen on shelf (6)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: B Anderson, Newcastle; E Glasgow, Cambridge; P Todd, London W11; R Segura, Crawley; R Halliwell, Bolton.

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Saturday 15 November 1997

Registered as a newspaper with the Post Office

ELEVEN PAGES OF SPORT BEGIN ON PAGE 16

Ye shall drink no wine,

Jeremiah 35:6

for it is written

Luke 4:8

صكنا من الامل

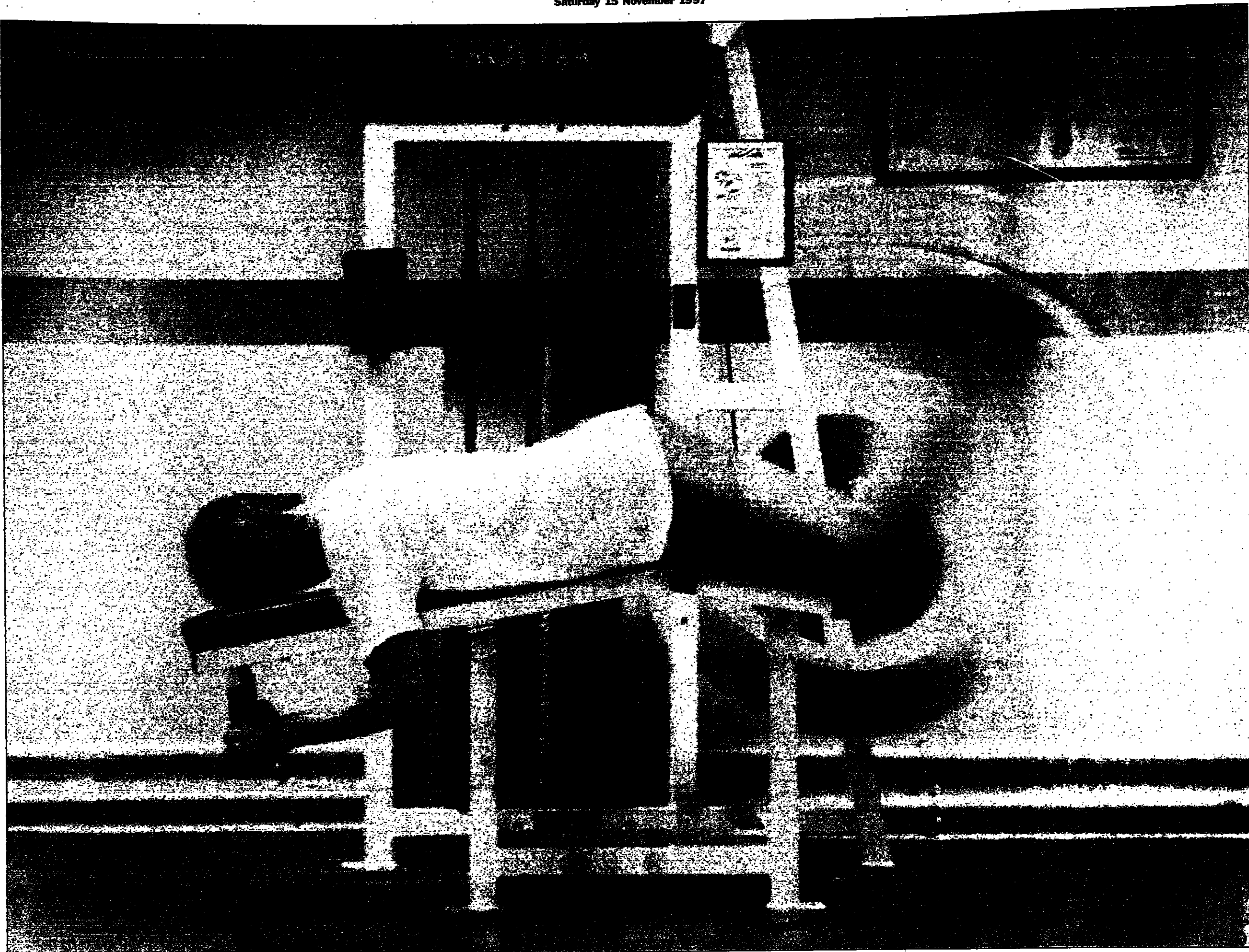




# YOUR MONEY

## PERSONAL FINANCE, PROPERTY & MOTORING

Saturday 15 November 1997



The developer's money-spinner: buying a flat in an up-market apartment block will often include exclusive use of gyms, swimming pools and steam rooms. But, as many people discover, the running costs can make service charges very heavy. And just how many residents actually make full use of these facilities anyway? See Penny Jackson's report in the Property section starting on Page 9  
Photograph: Dillon Bryden

### No place like home for getting down to work

Working from home is an ideal that many of us, tired of the office rat race, aspire to. Running your own business out of an attic, a handy outbuilding or a spare bedroom can be better than the mind-numbing commute on the 7.25am bus or train. But as Gina Vedrickas discovers, a few individuals take things a bit further.

Seeing 300 people trot through his former bedroom one day did make Steve Wright stop and think. "Oh God, what have I done?" Luckily, it is no longer his bedroom. Wright, a designer, has turned part of his residential Victorian terrace into a shop.

It is possible to walk down his south London street and not notice his house. But you would have to be en route to the opticians to miss the Gaudiesque mosaic path leading to the shop's entrance. Follow the path and it takes you into a shrine devoted to eclectic objects for the more catholic consumer. Wright, whose shop is named after him, sits behind his mirrored counter, amid a riot of fantastic pieces including a life-size golden Buddha, and declares, "I'm sick of minimalism, aren't you?"

Although he considered a high street location, Mr Wright believed a shop inside his home, in SE22, would get more attention. So far he's right. Visitors

pour in to marvel at the work of more than 40 designers and they also get to peep into his workshop, where he designs an array of objects from mirrors to rugs. Spying a rare couple of inches of wall space, his eyes gleam. "I think I've got some hats I could put there." Is he afraid that his modest home could be overrun with curious visitors? "It is a worry but it's worth it."

The door leading to the rest of his house is, however, firmly bolted. "People are nosy and maybe that's why they like coming here," says Mr Wright, who is keen to embrace as diverse a selection of customers as possible. "When you start adapting your home for the public it's hard to know when to stop. I'm planning a temple in the garden now."

If Mr Wright's visitors are as eclectic as the objects they've come to view, Jayne Barrett's are a more defined breed. "You've got to be at least three months pregnant to cross my threshold," she says. She does hire a hall for some active birth classes but mostly teaches at home from a disused dining room now devoted to birth preparation.

Cushions replace chairs and the *Encyclopaedia of Pregnancy and Childbirth* nestles beside a doll's head poking through a plastic pelvis. Ms Barrett believes sacrificing her personal space is worthwhile as women prefer classes at her home. "They're much more able to relax and they appreciate extras like quilted toilet paper. When they see my home they like me more."

Neighbours are used to the strains of

20 women humming as they practise breathing and stretching techniques and their only complaint is about parking problems caused by the flow of visitors.

Some neighbours are not so open-minded. Steve Isaacson, Lewisham's assistant planning officer, warns that complaints can scupper planning applications. "We've just refused permission to an aromatherapist based in a flat as neighbours were worried both about their communal areas and the massage parlour element."

Fortunately for the faint-hearted, Ms Barrett's house is not overlooked, as the sight of heavily pregnant women in tadasana poses could be startling.

The end results of her classes could well find themselves visiting Heather Benyayer. Her windows, covered in fire-works paintings, divulge her home's use as a Montessori nursery.

"When I started I had no idea how it would grow," Ms Benyayer explains. So why choose to have your home invaded? "I thought it easier not to have overheads. I didn't have the nerve to go straight off and find somewhere, and in my line of business I felt that a lot of people wanted their nursery to be within a home environment."

From starting with just a few items, mostly her own children's toys, she now has masses of equipment, five members of staff and 40 children.

She has made serious adaptations to her home. "From day one the council had to make sure there were no safety hazards. Now I've expanded upstairs

there's lots more; full fire alarms, emergency lighting, the whole works." Ms Benyayer admits that working from home has affected her long-suffering family. "A lot of partners would probably have walked out," she says. "My life changed overnight with the stress of worrying about things being tidy."

Home workers have to learn to cope with that disruption and deal with ambiguous feelings about their living, and working, space. Ms Benyayer says: "I lost all interest in interior design and gardening. We had to get rid of a lot of furniture and rip everything out of the garden in case it was poisonous. I didn't see it as a home any more."

As the nursery expanded, living space became tighter. "The living room went first, then the kitchen." With three boys squashed into one bedroom, pressure mounted. Finally, she says: "For my sanity we decided we either had to move the nursery or move out ourselves and it was easier for us to go. I'm a lot happier now."

Before starting a business at home: • Speak to your lender immediately. If you are using more than 40 per cent of your home for business they may insist on a commercial mortgage, often 2 per cent above standard rates, and you could lose tax relief.

• Talk to your local council. There may be planning implications and you could need a licence for some types of business. • Notify your insurers. There is no standard cover but each case is considered on its own merits.

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12/GAVIN GREEN  
Seeing past the moose



**NIC CICUTTI**  
PERSONAL FINANCE  
JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR

## A fixed-rate loan still makes sense

Are fixed-rate home loans the most sensible option for new borrowers and those seeking a remortgage? Or should they opt for discounted mortgages, where the cost of the loan is kept at a set percentage below the prevailing variable rate?

I am drawn into the debate by a claim earlier this week that fixing a mortgage may not be the best choice. The argument is that variable interest rates – the bog-standard mortgage repayment mechanism, have almost reached their peak with Abbey National and Northern Rock's decision this week to raise the cost of their loans to 8.7 per cent. If rates are going to come down again, a fixed mortgage is likely to prove uncompetitive within a short space of time.

It seems to me that there are two key considerations that have driven the long-term rate deals now available. The first is the money market's perception that by handing over control of base rates to the Bank of England, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has increased long-term monetary stability. Secondly, the Government's hope to join the European monetary union (EMU) in due course raises the possibility of future interest rate falls.

What has been the market's reaction to these two possibilities? Actually, long-term interest rates have already come down. From a peak of almost 8.5 per cent just nine months ago, it is now possible to find a five-year fixed-rate mortgage from Northern Rock at 5.99 per cent (plus compulsory insur-

ances) or 6.25 per cent from Alliance & Leicester, with no insurance requirements.

But if base rates were to drop next year, as many expect, wouldn't that mean even cheaper fixed rates? Perhaps, but if the markets have already factored in this potential movement, not by vast amounts – perhaps 0.5 per cent or so.

And what of EMU? Research by Chase de Vere, a London mortgage broker, shows that even if the UK joins (not until 2002, mind) mortgage costs in Europe do not suggest that convergence of base rates will mean a reduction in home loan rates.

The margin between retail base rates and mortgage rates is already lowest in the UK and Ireland, at about 0.7 per cent. Elsewhere in Europe it is much wider.

What then of discounted rates? One of the better five-year discounts available to first-time buyers is 1.25 per cent from Nationwide, which now charges 8.1 per cent, plus compulsory insurances usually deemed to add 0.25 per cent to the cost of a loan. Borrowers would effectively be paying 7.1 per cent.

For borrowers to benefit from this discount over and above that offered by the A&L fix, rates would have to come down by 0.8 per cent next week and stay below 7.5 per cent for five years.

Is that likely? I don't know. What I do know is that warning people against fixing a mortgage rate, particularly when they need to control their outgoings several years in advance, is very risky advice.

## MONEY MAKEOVER

# Making sure security runs in the family

**Names:** David and Kate Watson  
**Ages:** 44 and 42 respectively  
**Occupations:** Development manager and data base analyst

**Financial issues:** David earns £50,000 a year and has a company car. Kate works part-time for £6,000 a year. They have two sons aged 12 and 10, who attend a state school. The family live in Wiltshire, in a house worth £135,000, with mortgage loans of £92,000, to be repaid by two endowment policies when David reaches 60. They also have a credit card balance of £3,000 and a with-profits endowment policy about to mature for £9,000.

Their financial planning priorities are to ensure family security in the event of David's premature death; to ensure that they are adequately prepared for the cost of the boys' education at university in due course; and to have pension arrangements that will provide them with a good income after retirement when David reaches 60.

They want to know the implications of David taking early retirement and are keen, having recently completed the purchase, extension and renovation of their current home, to start a form of monthly investment to raise capital in the future. They have no current need for any large sums of cash other than for annual holidays.

**The Adviser:** Colin Stenning, a Fellow of the Institute of Financial Planning and a certified financial planner, is managing director of Harvey Parker Stenning, 47 Cheap Street, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5BX, 01635 34140.

**The Advice:** The family is relatively well protected in the event of David's premature death by the endowment policies which would repay their mortgage loans and the death-in-service benefit of four times his salary from his employer. Kate would need a net income of about £17,000 a year in today's terms to maintain her standard of living. A further £90,000 of cover on David's life would be required to maintain this cash flow, proofed against inflation.

Additionally, it would be sensible if David could receive a lump sum should he fall victim to a critical illness, such as heart attack, stroke



**Planning for the future:** David and Kate Watson have a clear list of priorities

Photograph: Rui Xavier

or cancer. Cover to provide, up to David's age 60, a benefit of £50,000 for critical illness with a further £90,000 payable on death would, as David is a smoker, require a contribution of £110.78 per month. A policy offered by Pegasus is comprehensive and competitive in cost. David's employer would maintain his net income in the event of long-term sickness or disablement until his normal retirement age.

The family's basic financial security derives, for the most part, from David's existing terms of employment. Clearly, were he to change jobs a full review of the benefits provided would be necessary.

To provide £4,000 per annum in today's terms for each of their two sons at university over a three-year course it would be sensible to use personal equity plans (PEPs), which have tax advantages and potential to achieve above-inflation returns. Regular contributions of £200 per month increasing at 5 per cent a year compound, payable for six years, should provide the funds for when the children are 18, assuming an investment growth rate exempt from tax at 9 per cent per annum compound. We would suggest Skandia's MultiPep which offers a competitive charging structure and a wide range of fund choice, including those of many of the best known

fund managers. Notice does however need to be taken of the Government's plans to launch Individual Savings Accounts with effect from April 1999. To ensure that these funds for university were available in the event of David's premature death, additional cover on his life of £24,000 would be required, meaning a monthly outlay of a further £15.

With their mortgage paid off when David reaches his 60th birthday, the Watsons expect to spend about £19,000 a year in today's terms to maintain their desired standard of living. On present projections the benefits arising from David's past and present pension schemes appear to show that expenditure will exceed income by about £3,000 a year.

Aside from his employer's contributions, it is possible for David to set aside up to 15 per cent of his taxable earnings and scope exists for an additional £3,900 to be invested each year, on which he would receive tax relief at his marginal rate of 40 per cent. As he is already contributing to a pension top-up scheme, he could either increase contributions to this, or make contributions to his employer's own Additional Voluntary Contributions Scheme.

If David wishes to take retirement earlier than age 60, greater contributions will need to be made to achieve an equivalent result. On the basis of present funds and contributions it is worth noting that retiring at age 55 would increase the shortfall referred to above to about £7,500 a year.

The proceeds of the maturing endowment policy (£9,000) could be used in three ways. First, £3,000 could clear the credit card debt on which interest charges are high. A further £3,000 could provide a contingency fund in a building society account in Kate's name (as the lower rate taxpayer) and the balance of £3,000 made as a lump sum investment into the PEP referred to above, to give a head start to the saving programme for the boys university education. Windfall shares held in David's name could be transferred into Kate's name reducing the liability to tax on dividends from 40 to 20 per cent.

## UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT/CHASE DE VERE DOUBLE BONUS BOND

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in five years investors have been able to get a double-digit return on capital guaranteed not to erode over one year. For anyone with over £10,000 in a taxed bank or building society account, this would represent a very sharp improvement.

**Drawbacks and risks:** The 10 per cent is only paid in the first year. As Tim Whiting of financial adviser Johnstone Douglas points out, if investors want a high one-year return, why not put all of it in the GE bond? The Scottish Widows bond returns an un-

competitive 6.5 per cent. This would improve if clients qualify for a terminal bonus. Is it for the short-term investor looking for return, or the long-term investor seeking security? "There's a degree of the penny marriage about it," says Mr Whiting. For

long-term investment, higher returns may be had elsewhere.

**Verdict:** A schizophrenic product with half its heart in the right place. Better than a taxed bank account. But then, what isn't?

**Marks out of five:** Two and a half. —Andrew Varty

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# 3/PERSONAL FINANCE

THE INDEPENDENT  
SATURDAY  
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## COLLECT TO INVEST

### Images the art world forgot

The story of Western civilised art begins with icons – still the only historic art form disdained by the art establishment's museums and galleries. Consequently, they are still the cheapest. John Windsor goes on a pilgrimage.

If you invest in icons hoping that an art-historical penny is about to drop – as, indeed, it should – you could be in for a wait. The fear of fakes and smuggled goods and the centuries-old suspicion that icons are idolatrous will ensure that those radiant saints, even Christ himself, will continue to be excommunicated from the commercial mainstream.

Console yourself by scrutinising the 13th century Italian primitives by Duccio di Siena, and by Cimabue and Giotto of Florence, in the National Gallery. Are these really the first modern paintings, as the authorities would have us believe?

True, the first, faltering attempts at natural realism, especially the Florentines', prefigure the Renaissance. But the gold ground, simple forms and strong egg-tempera colours owe inspiration to a magnificent, older tradition of art – icon painting – that has been stuffed under the academic carpet.

Its centre was not in Italy but in Constantinople, today's Istanbul – glittering, ancient citadel of the Byzantine empire and of the Eastern Orthodox Church. There never was a Dark Age in Constantinople. Yet icons painted there by Christian monks before and during the Renaissance are today worth only a fifth or even a tenth of the price they might fetch if they had been painted in Italy.

It is partly a matter of taste. Following the schism between Eastern Orthodox and Western (Roman Catholic) churches in 1054, the Eastern tradition of icon painting, with its archaic, elongated figures and stylised facial expressions, remained intact wherever the Orthodox Church held sway – notably in Russia. By contrast, in Italy, the



Modern Icons: The Annunciation by the Russian artist Sergei Fedorov, on sale at Long & Ryle Art International for £4,000

Renaissance led painting into the naturalism that Western European eyes have become accustomed to.

Rich 18th century Englishmen on Grand Tours bought art in Italy. Russia was a closed country and Constantinople had been sacked by Moslem Turks in 1453. So icons remained, as it were, off the map.

Today, icons are a narrow and unpredictable market, with too few buyers and sellers to establish a track record of prices. Recent scandals have not

helped. Prices are still recovering from the fiasco of 1980, when Christie's sold the American George Hahn's collection of Russian icons for record sums. Only 10 have most of them

denounced as fakes by a former restorer at the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, which had sold them in the 1920s. In the end, the icons turned out to be genuine – but prices had plummeted and stayed low.

Dick Temple, a dealer in icons for 40 years, is optimistic. He says: "It's an accident of his-

tory that the West knows more about Asian or American art than Byzantine. But everybody is fascinated by icons and everybody knows that, eventually, they are going to recover."

"The art establishment treats them rather like doctors treat alternative medicine. They know it's there, but they wish it would go away."

Sotheby's got £232,500 two years ago for a 15th century Russian icon – a world record for an icon but still a trifle compared with the millions that Ital-

ian Old Masters can fetch. Mr Temple had sold the icon 20 years previously for £12,000. Its title: Christ Among the Doctors.

An exhibition of Russian icons, "Holy Russia", opens at the Royal Academy in London on 19 March. But you can test your eye for them before then by previewing Christie's sale on Thursday (2pm) of the Provato collection and the Russian icons in the general sale that precedes it (10.30am).

Remember that the artists were not striving for naturalis-

tic representation. Icon simply means image. They aimed to project the spirituality of saints and position them in the macrocosm. The stylised outlines – such as the bending in unison of the three myrr-bearing women at the deposition of Christ – were a convention strictly adhered to through the centuries. Readily identified, they had a narrative impact even on the illiterate – as well as being objects of veneration.

St Nicholas the Wonder Worker, in an 18th century 13in by 11in icon estimated £1,500-£2,000 in the general sale, can always be identified as a bishop with a short beard, receding hair, one hand raised and the other holding the gospels.

Mr Temple offers larger icons than most in the Christie's sale. His 16th century Russian Christ in Majesty, 67in high by 45in wide, is priced £95,000. He has noticed more buyers willing to pay £50,000-£100,000. But he says quality can still be found in the £750-£2,000 range – that is, good paintings, good colour, good composition. These are Old Masters, however anonymous.

Icons are still being painted. Long & Ryle Art International sells the work of a brilliant Russian artist, 35-year-old Sergei Fedorov. His effulgent 3ft by 1ft 10in Annunciation in traditional tempera, gold and silver on wood, is priced £4,000.

Maria Andipa's Icon Gallery has decorative 18th century Greek provincial icon fragments for as little as £70. And for coloured reproductions from £2-£4.95 and a calendar of 24 icons in colour, with commentaries (£14.95 plus £5.50 p&p), try St Paul Multimedia run by the Daughters of St Paul. These days, even the Western Church is catching up on icons.

*"A Brief Illustrated History of Icons" by Richard Temple, £5 plus £1 p&p: Temple Gallery, 6 Clarendon Cross, London W11 (0171-727 3809). Christie's (0171-839 9060). Royal Academy (0171-300 8000). Long & Ryle Art International, 4 John Islip Street, London SW1 (0171-834 1434). Maria Andipa, 162 Walton Street, London SW3 (0171-589 2317). St Paul Multimedia, 199 High Street, Kensington, London W8 (0171-937 9591).*

## INTERNET INVESTOR

ROBIN AMLÖT



### A new way to go for broking

A new broking service has been launched for investors in the London market. Xest, a division of Charles Stanley Stockbrokers, has set up an execution-only share trading service in conjunction with Electronic Share Information (ESI).

Xest charges a flat fee of £20 per transaction. A specially tailored package of market information from ESI is built into the Xest website, including share prices – real time or 20 minute delayed; personal portfolio management – the ability to store and value automatically; charting – stock charts per share; and news.

You are required to deposit funds in a Xest cash management account, which would earn interest at stepped rates starting at 5.25 per cent. Trading orders are authorised by a personal identification number and are immediately followed by e-mail confirmation.

Unlike the other three UK brokers offering internet dealing, Xest includes sponsored membership of the Stock Exchange's Crest electronic settlement system. Crest is the computerised system for tidying up or "settling" purchases and sales of shares. Xest makes an extra charge for Crest membership, an annual fee of £45, discounted to £20 for the first year.

The main advantage of Crest membership rather than using a nominee account, is that you are the direct beneficiary of voting rights and any share benefits. However, if using a nominee account does not bother you then other services may be cheaper.

While there may only be four UK brokers offering net services now, the number is likely to grow. Information provider Datastream/ICV, which operates the Topic 3 system for City traders, has signed agreements in principle with at least two stockbrokers to link them to its Market-Eye internet site. The company hopes to link the brokers' computers direct to its website and the Stock Exchange settlement system. Datastream believes this could cut in half the cost of straightforward execution-only deals.

The Market-Eye Internet Premium service provides real-time prices for UK shares, gilts and derivatives together with a comprehensive news service, both real-time

and historical. The service is also linked to Datastream's historical database. This allows you access to company accounts and historical price performance.

The Market-Eye Internet Premium service costs £10 a month, rising to £20 per month in January. These prices are significantly below those the company charges for exactly the same information to its professional clients in the Square Mile.

The new Premium service comes as an addition to existing delayed price information and news available free to investors at Market-Eye's website which was only launched in July this year.

If you do not need real-time share prices, several sites offer you access to time-delayed prices. That is, you see prices which are 20 minutes old. If you are looking for a good source of information on companies, you should check out the site run by publisher Hemmington Scott.

This is the company which produces the Hambro Company Guide and Company Refs. All the information in these reference books is available free online. The website includes results, share price histories and broker comment and forecasts on all the quoted UK companies.

In general, service charges in the UK still have a long way to go to match those on offer in the US, where online share dealing is already estimated to be worth more than £60bn a year.

Just how cheap are some of the services available in the US market? Would you believe free? Not so much low-cost as no-cost. Florida-based Empire Financial Group is now offering free execution-only trades to its clients. There are, however, some conditions. You must have funds on deposit with the brokerage and purchase a minimum of 1,000 shares worth at least \$5 each.

Of course, the US market is different. There is much greater active individual participation in share trading and, therefore, much greater demand for low-cost dealing facilities.

Xest: [www.xest.com](http://www.xest.com)  
Market-Eye: [www.marketeye.co.uk](http://www.marketeye.co.uk)  
Hemmington Scott: [www.hemmington.co.uk](http://www.hemmington.co.uk)  
Empire Financial: [www.lowfees.com](http://www.lowfees.com)

## How to defend yourself against the VAT man

Managers who are made redundant are increasingly turning to self-employment as consultants. All too often, as Ken Welsby discovers, success in their new field can lead to problems with the VAT system.

Gerry and Joan Walker thought running a small business was hard enough. Then they were

presented with a demand for £10,000 after the local VAT office ruled that they had under-declared their liabilities.

Their West Country computer consultancy – launched after Gerry had been "out-placed" – was still struggling to break even at the time. Joan wrote back, asking for more details. Over the next four months the exchange of correspondence grew more heated, and the Walkers became increasingly worried.

The last straw came when the Walkers were told that unless they paid up immediately they would be taken to court. They handed the problem over to their solicitor and accountant. After a further three months of work and worry – and spending more than £1,000 on professional fees – they were told the problem was all down to a wrong interpretation of the firm's books. Their liability was less than £500.

The Walkers are far from being alone. Taxpayers who appeal against VAT penalties often get a standard letter saying that "from the information given, the reasons do not amount to a reasonable excuse and the penalty therefore remains intact".

At this stage, says Nigel Ferrington, VAT consultant at chartered accountants Moores Rowland, many people mistakenly give up, "either because they are frightened of upsetting their local VAT man or because they think it won't make

commercial sense to fight any further."

Mr Ferrington, who deals with up to 100 cases a year of firms facing serious VAT penalties, says it is often worth doing some "digging and delving" to provide material for the defence.

Reasons which can be interpreted as "reasonable excuse" can include the illness of a partner or senior staff member, pressure of work, and even – in the case of a sole trader or small business –

personal and family pressures.

"For example, if a big customer failed to pay, and this had a dramatic effect on your cash position, it would be worth arguing the case."

"If you could show that you had done your due diligence, that the customer had appeared credit-worthy, and that you had prioritised your obligations to pay VAT ahead of trade debts, that ought to count as a reasonable excuse for non-payment."



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# 5/PERSONAL FINANCE

THE INDEPENDENT  
SATURDAY  
15 NOVEMBER 1997



THE  
JONATHAN DAVIS  
COLUMN

## Legend has it he saw the Great Crash coming. What would he be doing now?

Given the great interest at the moment in drawing parallels between the decade leading up to the Great Crash of 1929 and the current bull market in shares, I have this week been taking counsel from one of New York's most legendary stock market investors.

Bernard Baruch was in his own way the George Soros of his day, a hugely successful speculator whose name alone had the power to move markets, yet who also found time to move in circles of power and play his part in the current affairs of his day. Baruch died in 1965 at the age of 94, but in addition to his millions, he left behind some fascinating thoughts on the subject of how to handle the pressures of stock market investing.

His experiences in the Great Crash were particularly interesting. At the time Baruch was in his sixties, successful in business and fabulously well connected. While continuing to play the market in large and bold manoeuvres, he had ceased to be a full-time market operator and sat as a director on a number of well-known companies.

Most of what there was to know about what was happening was his to know. Winston Churchill was just one of those who took advantage of visits to New York to take advice on what he should do with his investments. (Baruch in return contributed \$100 to a fund to buy the future Prime Minister a Rolls-Royce).

Legend has it that Baruch was one of the few investors of the day to see the Crash coming; in his autobiography, he says he realised something

was badly wrong with the markets while on a shooting trip in Scotland. In addition to baling out of stocks in time to avoid the worst of the crash, he implies that he also made a substantial amount of money by "going short" as well - that is, selling shares he did not yet own in the expectation of buying them back at a profit later. Although the bulk of his market gains came from riding bull markets, Baruch had always been an active short seller.

What made the Great Crash of 1929 so devastating was that it was actually a three-year bear market, not just the daily sensation that survives in popular legend.

The Dow Jones index did fall 13 per cent in one day in October 1929 (a smaller fall in percentage terms than October 1987), but the damage did not stop there. Between its peak in 1929 and the low point in July 1932, the market fell by no less than 89 per cent. The attrition, coupled with the fact that many investors were buying shares with borrowed money, was what eventually bankrupted so many.

Despite his public assurances, Baruch did not in fact survive the market's fall unscathed. As his biographer, James Grant, points out, when his secretary prepared an audit of Baruch's finances in November 1931, it showed that his total assets amounted to some \$16m. This was a good deal less than at the peak of the market in 1929, when his net worth was estimated to be around \$22m-\$25m.

In a note to a politician friend at the time,

Baruch confided: "I can tell you that the drop in my securities has been very severe, but I can still live in comfort and peace as I have done before. But I may not be able to help out in many of the directions I have heretofore, until the ship floats anew on the incoming tide, which of course it will do some time."

Although the records of his dealing activities are frustratingly incomplete, it is clear that the idea that Baruch cleaned up during the Great Crash was therefore no more than a popular myth. For all his connections, and his years of experience, the evidence suggests that he did not get out of shares in time to avoid the impact of the crash.

Even so, the breakdown of his assets at the time of his audit shows how successful Baruch was in avoiding the worst of the market's fall. In November 1931, according to his secretary's note, no less than half his money was in cash: \$8m out of the \$16m total. The rest was split more or less evenly between stocks and bonds.

Yet Baruch's private papers support the idea that he may have been more exercised by the market's fall than his public demeanour suggested. In a note he wrote to himself in 1930, he set out the qualities he reckoned it took to be a successful investor.

Top of the list he prepared was what he called "personal equipment", or what we might call today character. He listed six main decisive qualities: self-reliance ("do your own thinking"); judgment ("don't let what you want to happen in-



From bull to bear: Wall Street in 1929  
Photograph: Hulton Getty

fluence your judgment"); courage; openness to new facts; prudence ("become more humble as the market goes your way"); and pliability ("Stubbornness as to opinions must be entirely eliminated", he opined, adding, "When you decide, act promptly, don't wait to see what the market will do.")

There followed a list of prices and economic indicators ("the facts") that Baruch reckoned it was worth following in trying to judge the level of the market.

Finally, he added a section on psychology, observing that nearly everyone is controlled by their emotions, and that people "become alternately over-optimistic and over-pessimistic." His advice was: "Have an opinion on what the market should do, but don't decide what the markets will do." (In other words, don't try and fight the way the market is moving, since it will always overshoot one way or another.)

And finally, he thought, "Always make allowances for chance - keep a financial and mental and physical reserve. Always reduce commitment if doubtful."

What would Baruch think of today's markets? History does not of course relate. His motto was the one I mentioned last week: "Cut your losses and then your profits." But he also had this advice for himself: "In general, run quickly." In other words, when you decide to change your stance on a market, do so decisively - and above all don't get caught financing deals with borrowed money. In today's markets, investors might care to take note.

### BARGAIN BASEMENT

## A good job for insurance

Norwich and Peterborough Building Society's insurance broking arm is launching a new Coverguard accident, sickness and insurance policy for homebuyers, in which policyholders will be charged on the basis of their job status and other factors. For instance, a teacher aged 39 would pay £3.63 a month for each £100 of monthly cover taken out. Call 01223 352421.

Glasgow Investment Managers is extending the no-initial-charge offer for its three peapable investment trusts - Shires Income, Shires Smaller Companies and Glasgow Income Trust - until December 31. Call 0800 435797.

Hill Samuel Asset Management is launching an investment trust PEP focusing on smaller companies in the UK and Germany. Initial costs are 0.75 per cent, with a 1 per cent annual management fee. Minimum lump sum investments are

£1,000, or £50 for monthly premiums. Details from your nearest independent financial adviser or 0117 971 1177.

The Association of Investment Trust Companies has published a free fact-sheet explaining how to use investment trusts to provide income. Call 0171 431 5222.

Woolwich is offering a 1 per cent reduction on its standard loan repayment rates for loans between £500 and £5,000. Charges on the Select Personal Loan now range from 16.5 per cent APR on loans up to £2,900 to 11.9 per cent APR on loans from £10,000.

FirstMortgage, the telephone lender, is launching a two-year discount of 3.55 per cent on its existing 8 per cent variable home loan rate. The company also offers a four-year fixed mortgage, charging 6.15 per cent. Call 0800 080088.

Nordstern Insurance is launching a policy to cover

owners of antiques and other artefacts if legal title to their purchases is in dispute. Call 0171 6265001.

Carlyle Life has launched a scheme allowing home income plan borrowers, who take out a loan on their properties to live off their income, to benefit from double the normal Miras tax benefits typically available on the first £30,000 of their loans. Call 01222 371725.

Prospero Direct, the home and motor insurer, is offering a free guide to help homeowners reduce the effect of winter weather, with details on who to contact if disaster strikes. Call 0500 500575.

Birmingham Midshires Guernsey, the building society's offshore arm, is launching a 90-day notice account paying 7.75 per cent gross on balances above £50,000. On deposits of £10,000, the account pays 7.55 per cent gross. Call 01481 700680.

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Legal & General	£9.30	Virgin Direct	£13.43
Scottish Widows	£10.06*	Scottish Widows	£13.55
Marks and Spencer	£10.45	Marks and Spencer	£13.75

Age next birthday. Sample monthly premium rates only. Source: Company's illustration, 2/10/97.  
\* £10.00 minimum premium gives cover of £103,896



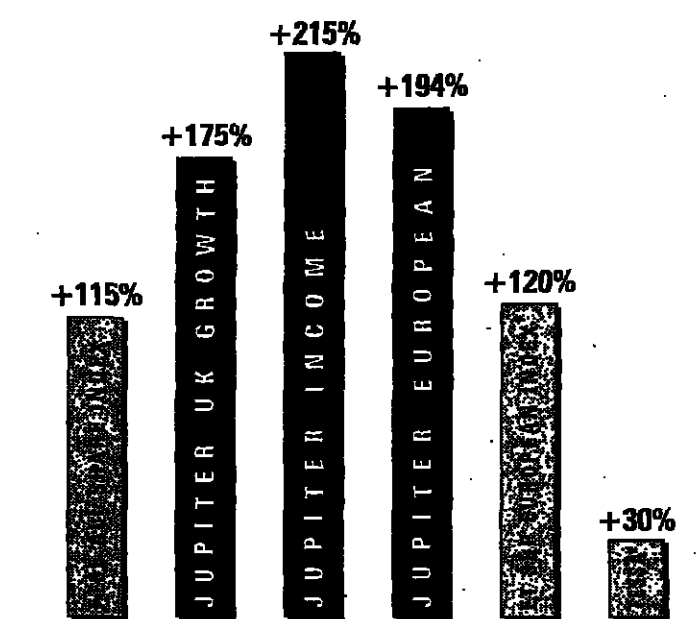
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Jupiter unit trusts compared with indices and TESSA

Source: Micropal. Offer to bid, net income reinvested, 5 years to 3.11.97  
\*UK Savings TESSA £3,000 investment index. \*Excluding UK

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## UNDERSTANDING THE STOCK MARKET

### Gilts: no gold but a solid income

Understanding shares and the stock market also means coming to grips with safer, income-yielding savings, including gilts. In the latest in his series, John Andrew explains what this Government-backed investment is all about.

Right down at the bottom of *The Independent's* shares page there is a section headed Government Securities. Although they are known as gilts, the certificates, contrary to popular belief, have never been edged with gold.

The name is likely to have been coined because of their reputation, as the Government has never reneged on any gilt. However, this does not mean they are without risk, as the price of gilts traded on the stock market fluctuates.

There are two basic types of gilt - index-linked gilts (ILGs) and conventional ones. In this article we will concentrate on the latter.

There are four sub-categories of conventional gilts. Perpetuals have no set redemption date and will probably never be repaid. Shorts will be redeemed within two years; mediums from two to 12 years, while longs are redeemable anything above 12 years.

Gilts have names such as Treasury, Conversion, Exchange or Funding. The actual name of the gilt is academic; what is important is the interest rate it pays and its redemption date. The last one listed on our shares page is Treasury 8% 21, which is shorthand for 8 per cent Treasury 2021. This means that this gilt pays an interest rate of 8 per cent - also known as the coupon - and it will be redeemed in the year 2021.

While every £100 nominal value of Treasury 8% 2021 will pay £8 a year for the next 25 years, the price one really pays for it will fluctuate on the market. Prices move to reflect actual and anticipated changes in interest rates. Simplistically, if interest rates rise, the price of gilts falls and vice versa.

The explanation for this is simple. The higher the interest rate, the greater must be the value of the interest paid by the gilt. This works the other way round, too. Say a gilt was issued when interest rates generally were 10 per cent. Let us call this fictitious stock Gilt 10%. One hundred pounds nominal value of the stock would produce an income of £10 a year. If interest rates in the market fell to 5 per cent, Gilt 10% would still pay interest of £10 a year.

Investors would then be prepared to pay up to £200 for each £100 nominal value of Gilt 10% as at this price it would still produce an income of 5 per cent a year (£10 as a percentage of £200). This is an over-simplification as the price is determined by investors' views of future rates and the redemption date of the stock.

The prices quoted for gilts are for £100 nominal value. They are the middle of the buying and selling prices at the close of business on the previous business day. Look again at the entry for Treasury 8% 21 on the shares page. You will see that investors will have to pay around £120 to secure £100 nominal value of the stock.

The penultimate column is headed Red Yld. This is the abbreviation for redemption yield. As you will see, it is around one and a half points below the coupon rate of 8 per cent. This is because the redemption yield is the sum of all the gross interest dividends and the capital gain or loss at redemption, expressed as a percentage return per year. It is lower than the coupon rate because at redemption, investors will make a capital loss.

The booklet "Government Stock" is obtainable from all main Post Offices or by calling 0645 645 000.

## For investors of a nervous disposition

Fund managers use a range of guaranteed funds to tempt nervous investors into the stock market. But as Paul Slade argues, even in a case like October's share price plunge, the value of these guarantees can be more apparent than real.

Many building society savers know that the stock market is where the best returns are to be found, but still do not quite have the nerve to put their money into a traditional unit trust. They saw the stock market plummet in the 1987 Crash, watched appalled at the market's ridiculous gyrations at the end of last month, and conclude it is all too risky.

The industry has responded by launching a range of equity funds which either promise your capital sum cannot fall over a period of five years, or lock in your gains every few months by regularly setting a floor price which your units cannot fall below. These are usually marketed as "guaranteed", "protected" or "capital secure" funds.

Such products are a powerful sales tool for fund managers, as they provide nervous investors with just enough reassurance to take the plunge into equities. But the guarantees they offer come only at the price of reduced performance, and the chances of those guarantees ever being triggered is next to zero. Some funds provide the guarantees by withholding part of your cash from the equity market, using derivatives to cover the risk instead. Others retain the dividend income you would otherwise get from your shares - currently about 4 per cent a year.

Independent financial adviser Amanda Davidson, a partner at London-based Holden Meehan, says: "Nothing comes for nothing and that's as true in the investment world as anywhere else. If you're getting something that looks as if it's shoring up your potential losses then you're paying for it somewhere along the line."

"I'd prefer most clients to be investing in ordinary unit trusts or investment trusts and let them take the full risk and the full reward. These

things are very finely costed and, if the guarantee is likely to be invoked, they're probably taking more out of the client's investment."

The market's dramatic moves at the end of last month provide a perfect opportunity to illustrate how these funds work in practice. Let's take the example of Tuesday 28 October, when the FTSE 100 index of leading shares plunged 457 points as soon as the market opened.

Even at this nadir, five-year guarantees - had such products existed in 1992 - would have been irrelevant, as the market remained well above its level five years ago. On 28 October, when the market recorded its lowest closing price, the FTSE 100 share index remained 79 per cent above its level on that date in 1992.

If any guaranteed fund's floor price were to come into play as a result of the 28 October fall, you would expect it to be one of the funds which reset its floor price every quarter - the most frequent re-calibration available. These funds would have come closest to setting the floor price

which applied on October 28 while markets were at their peak.

AJB Govett's UK Safeguard unit trust, for example, last set its floor

to 138.74p. By 7 November it had fallen back to 137.69p. In fact, the Govett guarantee can be used only at the end of each three-month pe-

**'Nothing comes for nothing. If you get something that looks as if it's shoring up your potential losses, then you're paying for it somewhere along the line'**

price on 19 September 1997, at a level of 136.83p - equivalent to 98 per cent of the bid price on that day. The bid price is the price at which a fund manager will buy back units from investors.

Units in the AJB Govett fund are valued daily at 10.30am, which means the 28 October valuation came while markets were close to their worst point. That day's bid price was 135.94p, nearly a penny below the floor value.

By the next day, the bid price had already climbed back to 138.23p and by 3 November had climbed further

to 138.74p. By 7 November it had fallen back to 137.69p. In fact, the Govett guarantee can be used only at the end of each three-month pe-

riod, and so will kick in only if units are worth less than the floor price of 136.84p on December 19 this year.

In effect, the drop on so-called Red Tuesday was cancelled out by the subsequent recovery.

Independent financial adviser Graham Bates says: "Where you're looking at repricing every three months, it's possible investors will have seen some benefit in the very short-term. But, of course, because the market jumped again so quickly, it could only have applied immediately after the major market fall on the morning of Tuesday 28 October."



Only an absolutely panic-stricken investor would have sold then."

Of course, that picture can change. As many experts recognise, the biggest falls seen in UK stock markets over the past 15 years have tended to take place in brief flurries lasting days or weeks, accompanied by relatively depressed share prices for a few more months until a recovery is under way.

If share prices were to drop by, say, more than 10 per cent and then stay at that new level over the prescribed three-month re-pricing period, the maximum loss of most guaranteed funds would be pegged at 5 per cent, the amount put in risk during that time, limiting the downside. They would then have the chance to regain in value during the next three months.

One further disadvantage of guaranteed funds is that they often tend to place pre-agreed limits on the investment period. But if markets were to fall by 5 per cent, and then another 5 per cent in the final six months before the fund matures, the total 10 per cent loss has to be borne. By contrast, a typical investor might prefer to ride out the rough patch and wait for a more propitious time to dispose of his or her unit or investment trusts.

Few funds, one of them being the Close Escalator Fund, allow a no-exit limit whereby gains - and losses - can continue to be locked in at infinity. The Close Fund, however, tracks not just the UK and/or the US markets, but a range of indices around the world, including Japan, the Far East and Australasia.

Don Clark, another IFA, agrees that guarantees are often not very good value, but makes one exception. If you know you will need a set amount of money at a certain date in the future - for a family wedding, perhaps - he says it may be a good idea to switch to a suitable guaranteed fund about 18 months before the event so you know the minimum amount will be there when you need it.

Ms Davidson adds: "There are some people who just sleep easier knowing there is a guarantee there, and if that is the case, then it's worth paying for. Many clients may not realise the full price they pay, such as loss of dividends, but I think most are canny enough to know you don't get anything for nothing."

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\*You should be aware that the government announced in the July 1997 budget that from April 6 1999, the tax credit on income may no longer be reclaimed in a PEP and that other tax benefits may change with the planned introduction of a new Individual Savings Account.

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# 7/PERSONAL FINANCE



Decisions on transferring pension holdings can have a huge impact on your future prospects

## The pension poser for people who stop paying

Each year hundreds of thousands of personal pension holders stop paying premiums early. Should they transfer holdings to occupational schemes, another personal pension, or leave them to grow with their present company until maturity? In the first of a two-part series, John Chapman looks at the options.

Typically, the key factor will be the value of any holdings transferred out, as compared to how much they are worth if left with the existing scheme. This second option means accepting a "paid up" value. However, savers may be misled by an inflated paid-up estimate of their holdings.

Transfer values, how much a fund is worth when it is switched to another scheme, are reasonably well understood. They are known to be considerably less, usually, than the total contributions paid in.

But until recently, paid-up values

have been a grey area. No longer. Alan Lakey, an independent financial adviser at Highclere Financial Services, obtained projected transfer values and paid-up values at key stages of pension plans, and the projected value at maturity, assuming growth of 9 per cent a year less charges, if the money is simply left in the existing personal pension.

His survey for the magazine *Money Management* shows that most companies offer identical transfer and paid-up values. But out of 51 companies, 14 project dramatically higher paid-up values. At the two-year stage of 30-year policies with premiums of around £2,000 are exceeded by paid-up values of about £5,000.

Let's put things in perspective. After two years, a total of £4,800 of premiums will have been paid. What might you expect the value of your fund to be? With some companies you will get transfer and paid-up values of nearly all your outgoings and sometimes more. For example, Equitable Life shows net growth of 8.5 per cent per annum, with only 0.5 per cent being taken in charges. Many other

companies have miserable two-year transfer values but apparently redeem themselves with high paid-up values.

However, the projected growth rates of some paid-up values are abysmal. With J Rothschild Assurance and Skandia Life, growth in the value of the fund until maturity is only about 4 per cent a year, with an amazing 5 per cent going in annual charges. The projected maturity value from Sun Life is only £12,024, less than a quarter of the £49,566 from Equitable Life.

The splendid paid-up values are illusory. They cannot be cashed in and the maturity values are general poor. Should plan-holders instead take the miserable transfer values on offer and seek higher growth elsewhere? In many cases, yes.

The charges that cause this havoc often arise from premiums being put into "capital units" (a grotesque misnomer) and levies on first and second year premiums eating into plan holdings each year until maturity. Next week, we will publish tables showing where many of the companies stand, to help you decide whether switching is right for you.

## Stung for acting on good advice

Investors are being penalised by personal pension providers for taking up the offer of a good occupational pension - despite this being universally recommended as best advice, writes Andrew Verity.

Fresh research by Lincoln, a life insurer which sees 45 per cent of its regular pension premiums lapse within three years, shows that 20 per cent of the lapses occur because policyholders are offered an occupational scheme.

An independent poll of 200 policyholders who stopped paying in, conducted for Lincoln by Marplan, revealed that 34 per cent lapsed because of unemployment, 23 per cent because of a career break to raise a child, and 20 per cent because they were offered a good occupational scheme.

Wayne Taylor, marketing and communications manager at Lincoln, says: "The research shows that 77 per cent of those who lapsed did so for genuine reasons."

The findings echo the massive review of mis-selling of pensions being pushed ahead by Helen Liddell, the Economic Secretary to the Treasury. This identified at least 600,000

people who had lost thousands because they opted for a personal pension rather than an occupational scheme.

Lincoln's findings, supported by Allied Dunbar research which arrives at similar conclusions, suggest that many personal pension holders are in a Catch-22 dilemma when they are offered an occupational scheme: ignore the occupational scheme and lose thousands of pounds by missing out on employer contributions; or join the scheme and lose thousands of pounds because of personal pension charges.

They come in the wake of separate research conducted by Bath-based Highclere Financial Services which shows that those who lapse early will often receive a sharply diminished pension fund when it matures. This is because a disproportionate amount of their savings disappears in life office charges.

Highclere principal Alan Lakey shows that some companies, including Skandia Life, levy heavy penalties on customers who lapse - despite the knowledge that they lapse for genuine reasons.

Lakey's research shows that despite appearing inexpensive, Skandia is the most expensive office for policyholders who lapse within five years and leave their pension with that office.

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## THE BASEMENT GYM AND POOL

# Often empty, but deep down, it's nice to know it's there

Among those who contributed to the £1bn spent on keeping fit last year there are bound to be backsliders who never so much as sat on an exercise machine. How much easier, then, to be strongminded when the pool and gym are a floor rather than a hike away. Penny Jackson goes in search of fitness fanatics in new housing developments.

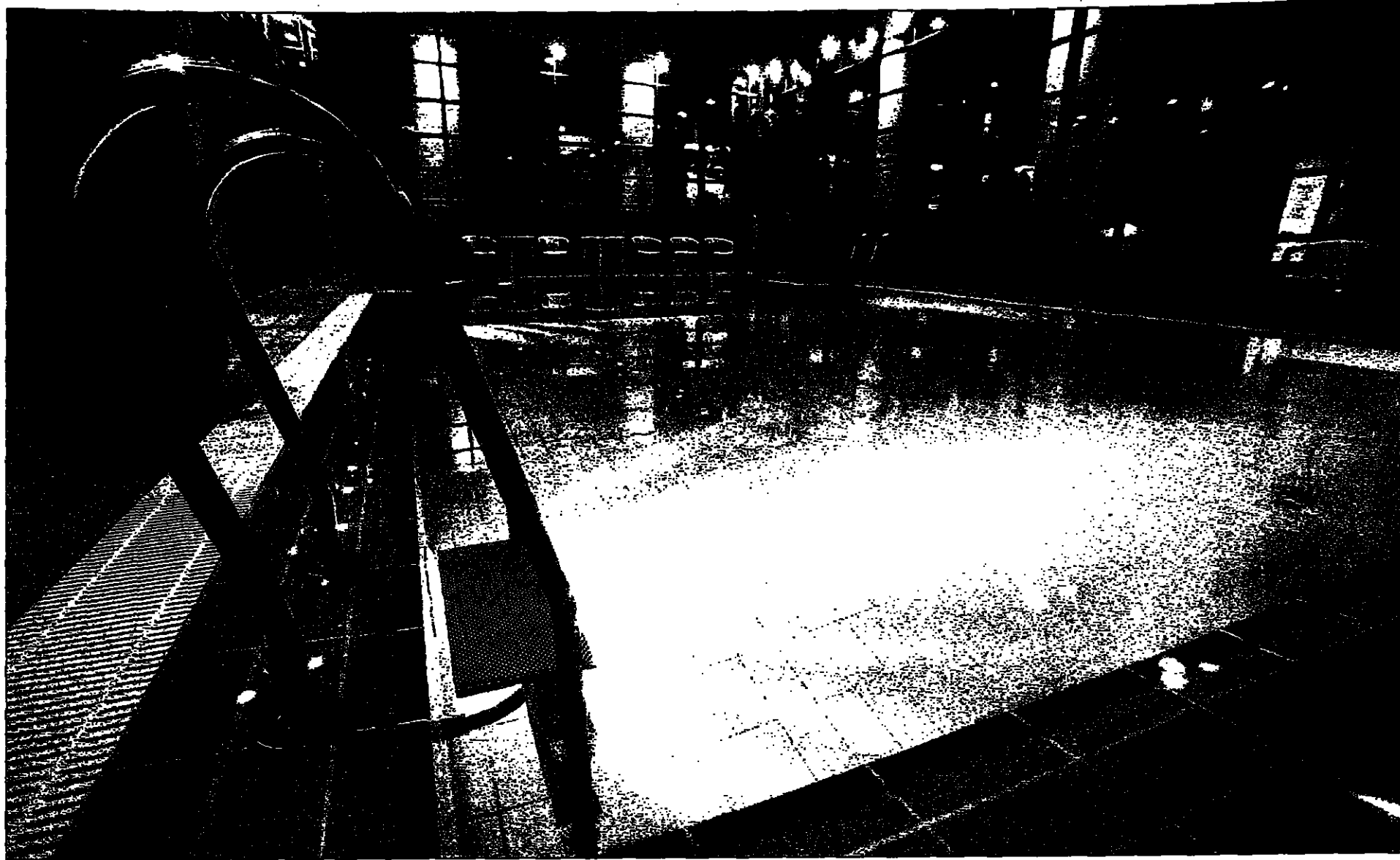
As is obvious from the brochures, developments with their own leisure facilities use them robustly in the marketing material. Some live up to their promise but others are simply a useful way of filling a space in the basement that cannot be used for homes.

Nevertheless, even a cramped gym and small pool go a good way towards meeting the expectations of overseas residents, particularly Americans. They may not use them, but they like to know they are there. In an area where there are good health clubs it is less likely that developments will provide facilities themselves.

Not surprisingly some of the best came with the 1980s expansion into the then desert-like Docklands in east London. At that time swimming pools went in with little thought about how they would affect service charges.

Since then residents have discovered that the upkeep and heating of a reasonable size pool can push service charges up by £1,500 a year, according to Tom Marshall of Chitons estate agents.

"The fewer the flats the more expensive it becomes and it is not economical on a development with fewer than 100 flats," he says. "Nobody walks in to ask for a flat because of the facilities, but they like the



The bottom line: the pool at New Caledonia Wharf, Rotherhithe, east London. Charges for such facilities can be high, though many choose not to use them

Photograph:  
Andrew Burman

idea of something being thrown in if it doesn't cost too much. Anyway, the trend seems to be to get out and socialise."

On a small development, Gill Lamprell at Knight Frank would expect a £3,500 service charge to drop by a £1,000 if the pool were to be removed. She points out that economy of scale means that a large scheme such as the 420-unit Metro Central in Elephant and Castle, in south London, with pool, gym and steam room can keep annual charges at around the

£1,300-mark for a two-bedroom flat.

At some flats, tenants began to find the charges creeping too high. At London Wharf, for instance, on the canal in Hackney, east London, residents elected to close the initially popular exercise area and save money. Given the cost of joining health clubs, if in-house facilities are good enough to tempt residents away from the kudos of club membership they will get their money's worth.

Luke Doonan, from Savills Docklands office, lives in the Bow Quarter development converted from the old Bryant and May factory in east London. He exercises almost every day. "I work late a lot and find it easier to go straight downstairs than take my kit to work and go to a club," he says. There are aerobic classes here every evening and it can get manic.

As one of the largest developments in London - 733 units - it has the usual 24-hour security, full time gym staff, as well as a pool, steam room and so on, and yet keeps service charges down to £1,400 for a two-bedroom flat and £1,000 for a one-bedroom loft. "It's also very sociable", Mr Doonan adds. "There's a bar close to the gymnasium and it always has people sitting down there with towels round their heads."

For the focused fitness enthusiast such distractions may be of little interest but many young buyers who work long hours do not want to exercise in lone splendour, however convenient.

At Anchorage Point, built in the 1980s on the Isle of Dogs with a particularly nice pool and large gym, no one is fighting over the rowing machines.

Bob Irwin, the building manager, says that it never gets crowded there. "The most I've seen in the pool at once is six. Obviously the complex, which is open from 6.30am to 11pm, is used more in the evenings and weekends but it's generally quiet. The Bank of China use it more than most, since it's a bit of a novelty." The

service charges for a two-bedroom flat in the complex are just over £3,000.

At the 116-flat Caledonian Wharf, Rotherhithe, where Bob Irwin has also worked, it is rather a different story. The colonnaded and self-contained leisure complex faces the Thames, in the centre of the U-shaped development. The glass on three sides makes swimming a more public affair. "It was very sociable and lively there," Mr Irwin recalls. "Pool parties were popular. I only once had

to put a stop to one when it threatened to get out of hand." A two-bedroom flat there costing £175,000 would have a service charge of £2,231.

The advantage of size is all too obvious when it comes to the Canary Riverside and Millennium Harbour developments under construction in the London Docklands. At Canary Wharf, tennis courts and a health club, spa and swimming pool complex on the river bank are part of the package for those who buy there.

On the other hand, the equally ambitious Millennium Harbour will have state-of-the-art leisure facilities that will be open to membership from non-residents. That is a trend which smaller developments are beginning to favour.

In Wimbledon, south-west London, Esprey Health Clubs is running the leisure complex on the entire ground floor of Pathfinders' Wimbledon Central scheme. Those who buy one of the 104 units will get a year's free membership, worth about £1,000. After that, they can choose whether to contribute to the £1bn keep-fit industry, which is expected to grow by a further £250m this year.

Canary Riverside: 0171 591 2388  
Millennium Harbour: 0171 488 9586  
Wimbledon Central: 0181 946 0081

## The buyer who spotted that subsidence is not the disaster it's cracked up to be



Cleaning up: Sue Botterill at the once-flawed house she and her husband have made their home  
Photograph: Rui Xavier

It is the stuff of nightmares. The hairline crack you thought was just an acceptable sign of ageing plaster gradually widens. Then the brickwork follows suit. For many homeowners, panic is the next step. But, as Robert Liebman discovers, for a small band of would-be buyers subsidence is an opportunity, not a problem.

The house had visible subsidence. It had once been divided into two self-contained flats which would have to be restored to a one-family home. And the seller was up-pity exchange in 10 days or the deal was off.

Eva and Peter Botterill, experienced homebuyers who, with two grown children still in the nest, needed a large property, had no objection to living in Kew Gardens, in London. Most importantly, they needed a bargain and are fearless.

"Roots from a nearby tree had cracked the drain, causing a wall to collapse," Mrs Botterill explains. "An interior wall had a huge crack running through it. But this was a solid 1930s house. I knew it wasn't going to fall down. And the subsidence had kept the price low."

As work on the Botterill home progresses, a handsome, spacious and sturdy home is emerging. Nevertheless, "subsidence monitoring" as a mortgage condition should serve as a warning to those with tender nerves or thin wallets.

Houses afflicted with subsidence may be heavily discounted. Some buyers in a market starved of quality properties may regard such damaged goods as better than nothing. Actual or would-be speculators

will be attracted to the prospect of big profits when they sell on, while estate agents may well have hard-to-sell properties of that sort on their books. But risks abound, often hidden in complex structural and insurance issues. Professional information and advice are essential.

Despite the risks, the Botterills had few doubts about the wisdom of their purchase. Originally a three-bedroom semi-detached family home, the property had been divided for two elderly sisters. Subsequently inherited by an Australian relative, the house was then bought by a local estate agent. "When we viewed it, the seller told us it was already under offer, and we offered £5,000 more. He accepted, provided we exchanged contracts in 10 days," Mrs Botterill says.

"But we were worried about another buyer moving even quicker. The seller had accepted a higher offer from us, so he could accept even more from someone else. He told us other people were interested. I'd have been silly, in a rising market, not to believe him. You can't be complacent if you want something."

"The seller's deadline did not give us much time for surveys so we got a surveyor friend of ours to look at the property. He identified the tree root as the culprit but reassured us that underpinning would not be required." A wall-strengthening procedure known as brick-stitching would suffice.

The couple paid a survey fee of sorts. "He advised us that if he put it in writing and charged us, the building society would take it seriously," Mrs Botterill adds. "If he had said, 'Don't touch this with a bargepole', his advice would have been free."

And if they had not had a surveyor for a friend? "If you wait for a survey or pick a slow solicitor, you won't get the

property," she insists. "You can't risk going through proper channels in a rising market. If necessary, I would have hired a local surveyor to provide an on-the-spot survey. Surveyors don't want to lose a fee."

Insurance was the next hurdle. "We had to make sure that the previous owner's insurer accepted the claim, so we had to get the benefit of the claim assigned to us."

The Botterills had been living, unhappily, in a rented flat after selling their home in Chiswick. Cash buyers, they nevertheless needed a mortgage for rebuilding work estimated at £50,000-60,000.

Mrs Botterill explains that the building society cooperated. But, she adds: "They put a full retention on the property to ensure that we reinstated it to a single dwelling - one kitchen, one set of meters. There had to be subsidence monitoring and professional rebuilding."

Ten days is more than adequate for a proper survey involving a drains test and soil sampling, according to Malcolm Hollis, a chartered surveyor. Soil information on specific areas is available from computerised data bases, "and we can also do an auger test at the site to take a plug out of the ground which provides a sample down to perhaps three metres. But surveyors do not have x-ray vision. There is always a level of risk."

Mr Hollis notes: "The downside of simple brick-stitching is that if the foundation is not replaced, and if movement continues because the procedure tackled the symptoms and not the disease, future repairs might be extremely costly and not covered by insurance."

Friendships may also be sorely tested. "Even surveyors can get it wrong," warns Richard Berns, senior partner with a London firm of solicitors, Piper Smith &

Basham. "Normally, buyers should check that the surveyor has proper negligence cover for an adequate amount. Preferably, your surveyor sits on the panel of the building society, otherwise the survey might not be accepted."

Mr Berns adds: "Buyers must appreciate that the fact of a subsidence claim has to be disclosed to future purchasers. A history of subsidence will put some potential purchasers off, particularly in a depressed market."

Subsidence usually involves the kind of work that means the home must be vacated. The Botterills cheerfully moved into a building site. Mrs Botterill points to the room that will get new French doors and to the rubble-strewn section of the garden where her kitchen will sprout.

She expects to live in tip-like surroundings for three months, followed by three more months of substantial decorating and interior work. "Then we will think about things like whether we want a pond in the garden. We won't be finished for several years yet," Eva says.

The omnipresent skip and the mud and dust are not entirely unwelcome. "We lived in our previous house for 15 years. Peter didn't have the enthusiasm to do it up again, and I was also ready for a change. If you don't change, you stagnate. We now have a project we can actively share for the next five or six years. It's good for us. It's good for our marriage."

For advice on subsidence: Royal Institution for Chartered Surveyors, 12 Great George Street, Parliament Square, London, SW1P 3AD, 0171 222 7000; Association of British Insurers, 51 Gresham Street, London, EC2V 7HQ, 0171-600 3333; Piper Smith & Basham, 31 Warwick Square, London, SW1V 2AF, 0171 828 8885; Malcolm Hollis, 01700-127000

## Insurers try to ease the pain but the signs this year are ominous

The cost to insurers dealing with that awesome crack in the wall has risen in the past year or two - but is still nowhere near as bad as it was at the start of the decade. More to the point, it is now easier than it was then to squeeze payment out of your insurer if it should happen to you.

After a period in which

angry home-owners were pushed from pillar to post in their increasingly desperate efforts to make their insurance companies accept responsibility for a claim, a settlement system is now up and running.

In 1991, says the Association of British Insurers (ABI), its members were forced to shell out more than £540m to settle

subsidence claims. A year later, the number of claims notified to insurance companies still ran to more than 45,000, but the figure claimed for was £259m.

Since then, after a period of relative calm, claims have started to mount again, from £125m in 1994 to £326m the following year. So far in 1997, the num-

ber is higher than in the first six months of last year. Given that far more claims are made in the second half of the year, after dry spells show up those cracks still further, the signs are ominous.

But anyone affected by subsidence should not despair, even if insurers have changed after the purchase of a new house. In a deal brokered by the

ABI, any claim notified within eight weeks from the date the current company assumed the risk will be dealt with by the former insurer.

Claims that are notified more than eight weeks and later than one year after the current insurer sold the policy is dealt with by that firm. It then splits the cost of dealing with

the problem with the old insurer.

Claims made a year or more from the date the risk was accepted by the new insurer are dealt with exclusively by that firm.

An ABI spokesman says that makes claims acceptance easier for many home-owners. But he admits that subsidence

can be wearying for many people who can be forced to wait many months before their problem is dealt with, especially if they are hoping to sell their house in the meantime.

"One of the more demoralising things can be if a company says that it is necessary to wait a few months to check whether it is subsidence and

how it should be dealt with," he says. "It is very hard to do anything about that."

"But the important thing is not to panic. The problem will be dealt with. Having an assessor from the company on site to deal with many of the technicalities is also helpful."

- Nic Cusati





# 11/PROPERTY

THE INDEPENDENT  
SATURDAY  
15 NOVEMBER 1997

## HOUSE SITTING

### Say hello to the cat, live in the lap of luxury, and then get paid



Money, and the rest: Colin and Jo Munro, two of William Lewis's team, on the watch at a property in Sussex

Photograph: Andrew Hasson



PENNY JACKSON

### The price mechanism pricks sellers' inflated hopes

Some mortgage rates have risen this week and certainly in London and the South-east the property market has slowed down. But what does this mean to the regular buyer and seller?

The fact that the number of Far Eastern investors has tailed off does not help the person selling a four-bedroom house in Tunbridge Wells. Clearly the inclination for buyers to panic has gone. Homes are not selling as fast, there are fewer buyers around and a healthier supply of properties on agents' books.

This is partly seasonal, of course, but it all sounds far less stressful than the spring story when good property was selling within days for well over the asking price. The London estate agents, Winkworth, find that some vendors have not quite caught up with the current mood. "There are those who are only putting their own homes on the market after they have found something to buy, expecting it to move immediately. That is simply not happening," says Hilary Wade, a director. "It is not that we are seeing prices falling but that buyers are not prepared to pay silly prices for a property that has been over-valued."

Apparently, discerning buyers prefer a spectacular one-bedroom flat to a run-of-the-mill two bedroom. It may not be of much comfort for those families desperately seeking a good-size house, but the number of instructions for flats has doubled this year according to Winkworth.

Meanwhile, other London evidence comes from Trevor Abrahamson of Glentree Estates, who has noted quite a change from a few months ago, when "a full-priced property was snapped up by one or other of a frenzied group, open cheque books ready to do business".

Now the pendulum is swinging towards a more balanced arrangement of buyers and sellers. "We are now taking property on to our books at full prices which are remaining unsold. For the first time in recent months vendors are asking us why properties have not sold as they anticipated. Mostly this is due to overpricing by the sellers themselves."

In the country, according to the marketing company The London Office, the story is similar. Estate agents find one of the biggest problems is the over-inflated opinions vendors have of their homes. "Even though there is considerable demand for country properties of all types, prices generally are beginning to plateau but vendors still feel their property has a higher value than that being advised by our member firms," Bob Bickersteth says.

Spotting an up-and-coming area of London is a game everyone can play, some with more success than others. Saville Research has long tipped the Paddington area as ripe for growth over and above what is usual. Yolande Barnes, at Savills, believes the most crucial factor to be the high-speed rail link to Heathrow. Many people favour South Kensington simply because of its Tube connection to the airport.

She also points to the essentially good stock of housing which at present is more than likely to be a somewhat seedy hotel. It has already started to come up, but the stock has the potential to be prime, she says.

"Take Sussex Gardens, tree-lined with lovely houses - it could be absolutely beautiful. The area is also on the borders of the Hyde Park estate, Kensington and Notting Hill which is another big factor." Winkworth considers the area's gentrification inexorable and has opened a Paddington and Bayswater office. "There are little mews houses and flats and the colonisation of the better-known estate agents can increase the supply of stock, which is very short there," Ms Barnes adds.

Fancy living in the lap of luxury without spending a bean? Even better, how about actually getting paid for it? For a small band of people this is one of the perks of their job. Except that, as Fiona Brandhorst discovers, you will have to move out after a while. And not every property carries that exclusive cachet.

Working for the stars is almost as good as being one. At least that is what Phil Swaine, an "executive house sitter", lists as one of the perks of his successful business. Along with his partner, Alison Verity, he spends his days looking after secluded luxury homes when the owners are away on business or holiday.

"When potential clients see our portfolio their eyes light up," says Mr Swaine, whose references read like television credits. Ms Verity has a way with horses so they pull in a lot of work from the show-jumping world, as well as the likes of Dennis Waterman

and Bob Monkhouse. "It's a 24-hour job at times," he says, "but we work together so it's not restricting." But is it tempting to spend hours soaking in the indoor swimming pool or Jacuzzi? "You soon get fed up with all that," Mr Swaine says. "When you've been up since 5am surveying the estate, all you want to do is lock up and go to bed."

On behalf of his Yorkshire-based firm, ASG Executive Security, he visits all his clients before taking on the work and charges by the week, starting at around £500 depending on the size of the property and work required when he is there. Living in such year-round luxury, Phil and Alison take only the odd day out on their less-than-palatial narrowboat.

"We could be in a huge farmhouse one week and a £5m property the next, so there's no point in going away on a proper holiday ourselves." Do they get the chance to network with the stars? "Sometimes we get invited to our clients' social events and we never know who's going to be there - I have to admit, we enjoy that."

Unlike Mr Swaine's clients,

William Lewis's live in council flats as well as country homes. Since starting Home and Pet Care around 10 years ago, he concludes that people are more concerned about their pets than their home when they go away.

And it can mean more than just feeding and stroking the cat, Mr Lewis says. "One of my most experienced sitters looked after a large property in Gloucestershire. On day one there were 165 animals to care for, including five expensive dogs, horses and goats. But as the days went by, animals started giving birth so the numbers were rising by about 10 a day."

Mr Lewis now has 250 people working for him all round the country, from St Ives to Inverness. He was not sure how to get in touch with possible sitters when he started, so he advertised in retirement magazines and church newspapers. It paid off: most of his sitters are Saga types, generally former pet owners, trying to fill the big hole in their lives that retirement has brought. Predictably, Mr Lewis has a Mr and Mrs Wool on his books and a dog that needs a bilingual companion as it only understands French.

Mr Lewis's house sitters always meet their intended clients beforehand and there is no commitment on either side. The cost is from £17 a day. "Not only are people's pets looked after in their own home but no one with a sitter has been burgled either," he says. With that in mind, he is careful about who he takes on to his books and checks work records going back 20 years, following up all references. Ageism is not a word he knows. "All my sitters are over 50 - they're just more reliable."

Heleen Wright's approach is decidedly more casual. She generally sits for friends of friends and has been lucky enough to be asked when she has been homeless between flats. But before anyone starts ear-marking short-stay addresses, they should consider her hidden expenses.

"I made the most of living in a five-bed luxury family home and had friends round for dinner practically every night for five weeks," she says. "I may have saved my rent but I blew it all on entertaining." The next time she house-sat she cut the dinner parties but still invited friends over

just to have a look. "It was owned by a really wacky couple who had loads of 60s and 70s stuff. The funniest thing was a four-tiered shelf unit covered with nodding dogs, lions and elephants. Every time I came down the stairs the whole lot started going."

Insurance companies generally do not ask questions about who is staying in your house when you are away, unless it is going to be for more than 30 days. Then the excess payable on any claim can increase considerably.

While most of us rely on neighbours to keep an eye on things while we are away, when there is more at stake it is time to call in the professionals. JPB Security Services provides rapid response security guards to patrol houses deep in the Surrey stockbroker belt. "When there is £100,000 worth of antiques in a property, people have to take security seriously," says JPB's managing director John Berry.

Even for an ex-police dog handler it can be a scary business. "I had a client who'd been given a death threat written in blood. I had to personally go and stay with his wife and family in a very se-

cluded property when he went away on business. It did get a bit tricky," Mr Berry advises people to only use security companies that are members of trade associations. "You can be sure they'll follow strict codes of training and operation."

A house sitter may feel confident when left in a strange house with a trusty list of emergency telephone numbers pinned to the noticeboard, but it is what the owners do not tell them that can be most worrying.

Vicky Magill house-sat for a friend this summer. The house had all the usual accessories - electric gates, heated swimming pool, sauna and gym. But by the end of the three weeks she was convinced about something else. In the middle of the night one of the television would mysteriously turn itself on. She checked for a time switch or a remote control but could only come to one conclusion. She was also looking after a ghost.

ASG Executive Security (01943 871 813); Home and Pet Care (016974 78515); JPB Security Services (01483 776999)

## Yes, why not think about buying in time for Christmas?

The market may be slowing down in the run-up to Christmas, but demand for homes is still running high, mortgage lenders report. Nic Ciatti finds out whether now is the time to look for your dream property.

It is often said that there are defined home viewing and buying seasons. Viewing is typically something that takes place in the New Year, immediately after the festivities have ended, as prospective purchasers resolve to act on their resolutions.

Offers to buy and subsequent completions of the property transactions is then assumed to take place in the

spring. Thereafter there is a summer hiatus, as people go on holiday, followed by a renewed bout of activity in the early autumn, on people's return from their breaks. November and December are supposedly lighter months, when evenings draw longer and few are inclined to traipse round dark, wet streets.

Does the same still apply? Not if you look at the latest statistics. Figures from Barclays Mortgages, a major lender, suggest that an autumn buying peak is becoming established, almost as strong as the traditional spring buying surge.

The lender's research suggests that mortgage lending rose by 10 per cent from October 1996 to the same month this year. This compares with growth of 15 per cent in the 12

months to April. Admittedly, this shows buying still lags behind, but not that much.

The best comparison is to judge the autumn sales against the increase for sales in the rest of the year to date. Average year-on-year growth in the past 10 months stands at 11 per cent, making the autumn season only marginally lower than the rest of the year, including the peak period.

Confirming trends noted by many other surveys, including the key ones from both the Halifax and Nationwide Building Society, plus estate agents, the areas where growth in mortgage lending has been felt most keenly is London and East Anglia. But this survey also points to fast growth in the North-west, pointing to the fact that the improvement in lending is

extending beyond the South-east of England.

Jim Chadwick, Barclays Mortgages marketing director, says: "What we are now seeing is a mortgage market which has recovered from the doldrums of the early to mid-Nineties. Despite the increases in interest rates there have been this year, stability seems to be encouraging people to move home. This is proving to be a good time to buy or move."

Barclays' research is based on an index which measures gross new mortgage advances that flow through solicitors' deposit accounts.

Typically, home buyers who arrange a loan will deal with a solicitor who arranges the legal paperwork and passes on the purchase price to the vendor. Barclays has a 30 per cent mar-

ket share of these accounts, which means that it is able to monitor the flow of funds coming from the full range of lenders in the market.

The key question many buyers will be asking is whether this is really the time for them to venture out into the cold to look at another property.

Here, the survey evidence points to the fact that, compared to three months ago, fewer consumers expect house prices to rise, although a majority still believes they will go up in the next 12 months.

The message appears to be that potential vendors are less likely than before to believe that by holding their properties back they will easily be able to get a vastly better price.

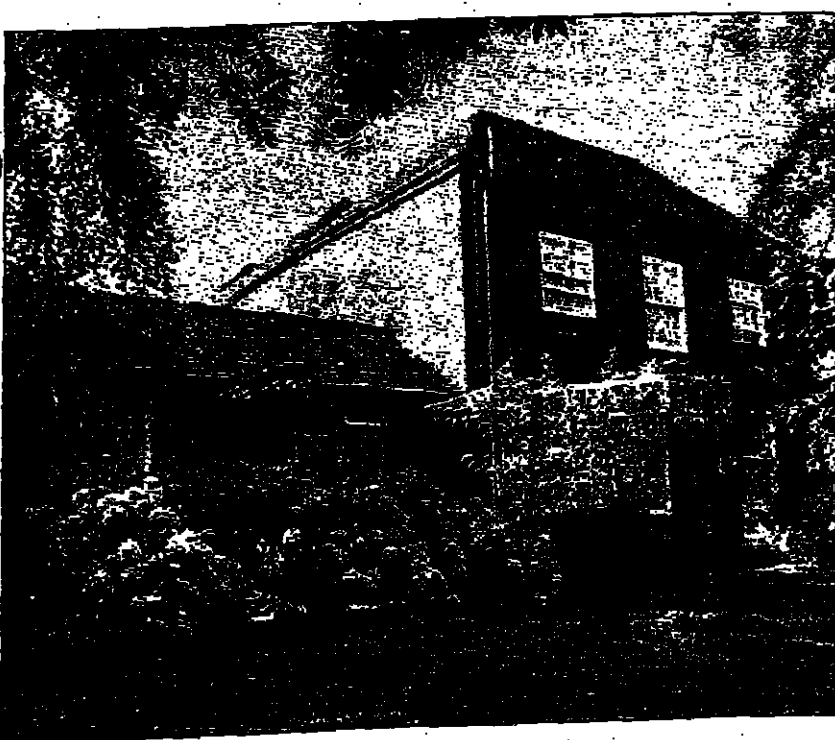
Buyers are still there: for every 10 properties on the mar-

ket in the North there are 19 people looking to buy, compared to 24 in the Midlands and 20 in the south-east of England. Hopefully, the combination of these two features will lead to reasonable prices being set.

It may also lead to a partial weakening of old, pessimistic assumptions about placing a property on the market in November. For those who think Christmas is all about presents, roast turkeys, port and stuffing, it still will be - but perhaps in a new home.

The Independent has published a free 27-page "Guide to Mortgages", written by Nic Ciatti, the paper's personal finance editor. The guide, sponsored by Barclays Mortgages, is available to all readers by calling 0800 585691. Or fill in the coupon on page 4.

## THREE TO VIEW/ UNDER £100,000



Number 4, Post Office Row, in Shottenden, Kent, is a period cottage in a quiet commuters' village on the North Downs. The community is only six miles from Faversham and the regular train service to London. The end-of-terrace two-bedroom house is set back from a small lane and screened by a high hedge. Calcutt MacLean (01233 812060), the agent, is asking £95,000.



The Old School in Nutbourne, Hampshire, dates from around 1880 - before school milk made everybody taller: the current ceiling height on the ground floor is only 5ft 11ins. Used as a school after 1880, it was later converted into a three-bedroom cottage, but now needs total modernisation. With courtyard garden and garage, it is for sale through Henry Adams (01243 377773) for £95,000.



Number 1, Tower Cottages at Hilders Cliff, Rye in East Sussex, is Grade II listed and stands in the lee of the Landgate in the Cinque Ports town. The two-bedroom brick-built cottage has exposed timber frame, open fireplace in the sitting room and panelling to dado height. The rear garden is paved and has a fountain, gazebo and small workshop. £90,000 through Phillips & Stubbs (01797 227338).

